

Particulars in Greek Philosophy

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A Series of Studies on Ancient Philosophy

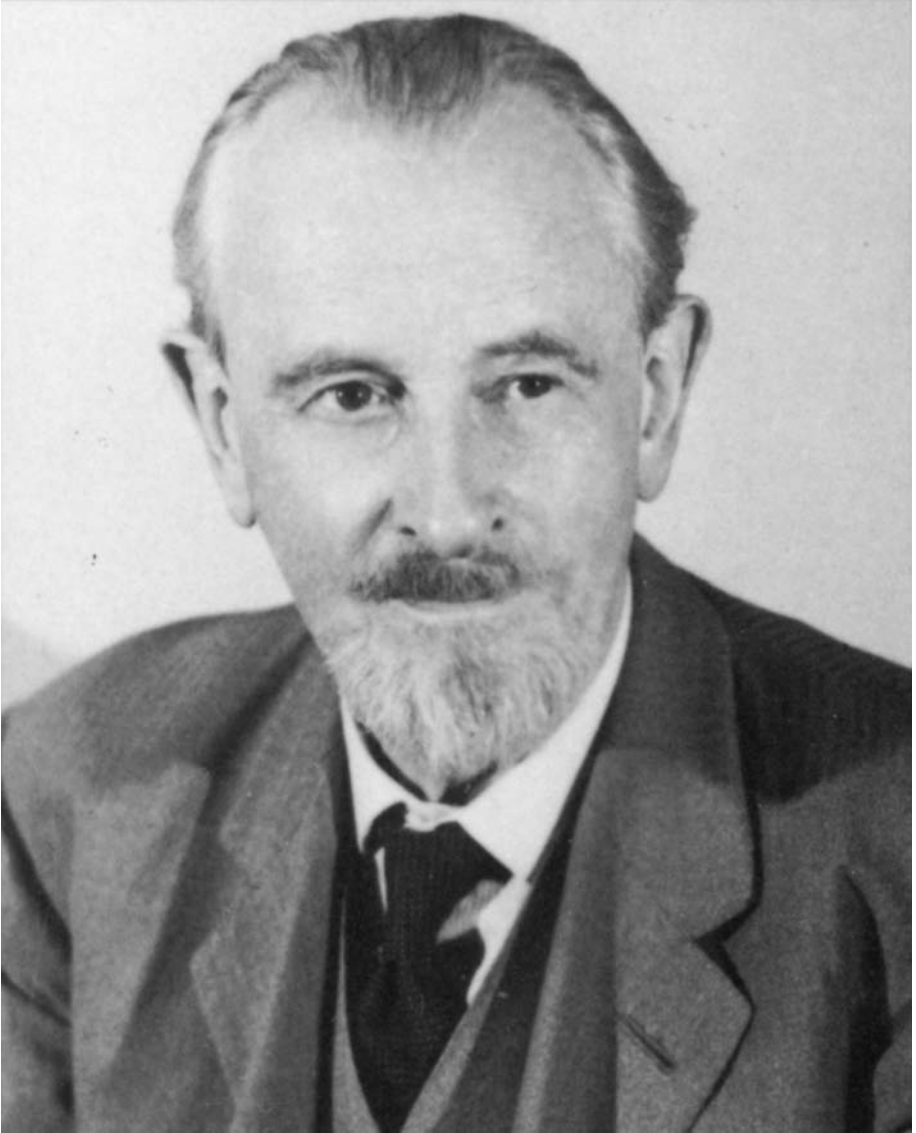
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Particulars in Greek Philosophy

The seventh S.V. Keeling Colloquium
in Ancient Philosophy

Edited by

Robert W. Sharples



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PREFACE

The papers in this volume were presented at the seventh S.V. Keeling Colloquium on Ancient Philosophy in November 2007. This series of colloquia, along with the annual Keeling lecture, are funded by a donor as joint activities between the UCL Departments of Philosophy and of Greek and Latin, in memory of Stanley Victor Keeling, who was Lecturer and then Reader in Philosophy at UCL until 1954. Keeling did not himself publish on ancient philosophy—his published work was on Descartes and on McTaggart—but he emphasised its importance as part of the philosophy curriculum. At the donor's express wish the Colloquia are held during the mid-term Reading Week so that students will be able to attend. A list of previous published colloquia will be found at the end of this Preface. The respondents to the papers in the present colloquium included Peter Adamson (Philosophy, King's College London), Terry Irwin (Keble College, Oxford), and Angela Hobbs (Philosophy, University of Warwick).

Thanks are due to the staff of UCL for help with various aspects of the organisation, and above all to Jean-Michel Hulls, Assistant Departmental Secretary in Greek and Latin at the time, for taking over a major share of the administration of the colloquium when I was myself convalescing from illness. Thanks are also due to Brill for their willingness to take on the publication of the series, and above all to the donor for making this and all the colloquia in the series possible.

RWS

May 2009

Previous colloquia in the series that have so far been published are as follows:

Aristotle and Moral Realism, ed. R. Heinaman, London: UCL Press, 1995.

Whose Aristotle? Whose Aristotelianism? ed. R.W. Sharples, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

Plato and Aristotle's Ethics, ed. R. Heinaman, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

Philosophy and the Sciences in Antiquity, ed. R.W. Sharples, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

INTRODUCTION

The late Bernard Williams criticised ancient Greek philosophers, by contrast with their non-philosophical predecessors, for introducing the unhelpful notion of a moral self devoid of individual character (Williams 1993, 100). Coincidentally, just before the 2007 colloquium an editorial in the *New Scientist* editorial referred to “the new science of econophysics, ... [which] uses physics-like models to explain the habits, fashions and behaviour in crowds of ordinary people, and is being applied to everything from trading strategies in the money markets to rioting behaviour.” (*New Scientist*, no. 2628 (3 November 2007), 3). Whether the new science had, or was intended to have, any relevance to morality I do not know; nor am I sure whether it is a positive or a negative answer to that question that should cause us more concern. The doctrine that only what can be counted matters does not always seem to take into account the fact that counting involves, to a greater or lesser extent, disregarding differences between individuals.

Protests against these tendencies indeed have a long tradition in modern times:

General Forms have their vitality in Particulars.

William Blake, *Jerusalem*, 91

Are God and Nature then at strife, that Nature lends such evil dreams? So careful of the type she seems, so careless of the single life.

Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 54

Part of a standard answer to the question what differentiates Presocratic philosophy from pre-philosophical thought about the world is that it is the search for general explanations. It can be argued that over-ambitious generalisations were both a strength of ancient Greek thought about the natural world, being a necessary stage if progress was to be made, and eventually a weakness. Whether strength or weakness, they were certainly a characteristic.

However, this in itself is a generalisation that may need qualification. It seemed, therefore, that a suitable topic for a colloquium would be the examination in more detail of just what various ancient Greek philosophers had to say on the issue of the universal and the particular. The title could have been “individuals in Greek philosophy”, but that, especially

when the proceedings came to be published, could have implied a set of character portraits of individual philosophers—a new Diogenes Laertius, in other words. So “particulars” it had to be.

What becomes immediately clear is that the problem was one of which the Greeks themselves were aware. In chapter 1 Robert Wardy shows this in connection with Plato’s and Aristotle’s discussions of the application of law to particular cases, Aristotle’s treatment of the moral vision of the person with practical wisdom (the *phronimos*), and Aristotle’s account of moral education. That Aristotle was not able to reach a decisive conclusion shows not only his typical dialectical method but also the intractable nature of the problem. In chapter 2 Carlo Natali further examines the place of universal and particular in Aristotle’s treatment of practical reasoning and the *phronimos*, and also considers the relation between virtue in general and the particular virtues—though the latter, indeed, are “particular” only in a relative sense. The implications of the extent to which “universal” and “particular” are each defined in relation to the other indeed constitutes one of the issues that underlies all discussion in this area; moving away from explicit concern with ethics, Verity Harte in chapter 3 examines the exact metaphysical status of particulars in Plato and in Aristotle, notably in the *Categories*’ account of individuals in the category of substance.

It may be argued that it is wrong to tar all ancient Greek philosophy with the same brush. A case can be made that ancient critics went astray because they failed fully to appreciate how, for the Stoics, individual situations differ from one another (for examples see Sharples 2000, 132; 2001, 540), even if the reference is still to types, albeit specified more narrowly, rather than to tokens. Christopher Gill in chapter 4 claims that the contrast between universal and particular was less important for Stoic ethics than some have thought, and in particular that it is not as central as has been supposed to two contexts in which it has been found, Chrysippus’ views on emotional therapy, and Panaetius’ theory of the four *personae* along with Cicero’s explanation of why suicide was right for Cato, even if not for the other defeated leaders in the Civil War against Caesar. Angela Hobbs in chapter 5 argues, in the context of a survey of positions on the issue in ethics in the last 250 years, that we should not look for clear-cut positions, and that for this very reason the passages discussed by Gill may be more relevant than he suggests; and Marwan Rashed in chapter 6 shows how confrontation with the Stoics, especially in the context of their doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the history of the world, compelled the Aristotelian Alexander of

Aphrodisias to concern himself with the status of particulars more than Aristotle himself had done, how this issue related to that of determinism, and how in this context Alexander's discussion would influence both Avicenna and Leibniz.

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CHAPTER ONE

MORAL VISION AND LEGISLATING FOR THE GOOD IN ARISTOTLE

ROBERT WARDY

Take, on the one hand, Plato and Aristotle and, on the other, a collection of fundamental oppositions: can we produce a neat arrangement aligning the oppositions in a hierarchy and mapping them on to the philosophers? Our first opposition is ontological: general and particular; and at the outset our scheme is in disarray. To identify Platonic Forms with the universal, their participants with the particular, would, of course, be an egregious error: democracy is a kind which just about manages to instantiate Justice Itself; since Justice Itself is a paradigmatic singularity, it would seem to be a transcendental super-particular—of sorts. No doubt form in the *Categories* is universal; but whether substance in *Metaphysics Z*, *tode toionde*, ‘this such,’ is particular, general, or somehow both at once, is a pretty question. On this count both philosophers contrast the formal with the material and give emphatic precedence to the former; they both conceive of form as a one, and of what has form as many (unless the form of the *Metaphysics* is itself an entelechy unique to its possessor—put that alternative to one side); but attempts to parse their metaphysics consistently in terms of general and particular immediately encounter profound and notorious difficulties.

Our second opposition is epistemological: knowledge and perception. Here different answers suggest themselves for Plato and Aristotle. No matter that the dialogues have such diverse things to say about cognition in general and perception in particular: the disparagement, if not the downright dismissal, of perception’s epistemological credentials stays constant. As is very well known, for Aristotle the proper content of perceptual experience is significantly richer than any Platonic text allows, and perception affords us crucial *archai*, starting-points, whence we proceed to construct full-blown theories. One might conclude that the answers are different in that the Aristotelian conception of perceptual experience is both more nuanced and favourable than the Platonic,

while nevertheless maintaining that they are alike in distinguishing it sharply from higher cognitive conditions. But while this is so for theoretical reason, *theôria*, it is not for practical wisdom, *phronêsis*. Naturally I am not denying that Aristotle's good man, the *phronimos*, is in possession of non-perceptual wisdom. However, the performance of soundly motivated, worthy actions is what right *praxis* is all about; actions are particulars; to perform correctly, the *phronimos* must grasp all factors in his situation pertinent to formulating his wise choice and initiating his action; and this grasp is perceptual. In the Platonic world, it is jolly convenient to have eyes in one's head so as to find one's way to Megara; in the Aristotelian world, the experienced eye of wisdom is vital for excellence in the realm of human affairs. So on the epistemological score, the alignment exercise achieves a complicated but interesting result.

Our third opposition is modal: necessary and contingent; and here, at least, the matter seems relatively clear-cut. For both philosophers, to revert to the ontological, necessary beings take pride of place before contingent ones, as do constant states and recurrences before temporary conditions and variable change; to revert to the epistemological, theoretical wisdom consists in the contemplation of a structure of eternal and necessary verities—indeed, that noetic structure is itself necessarily as it is. Yet here too we confront an Aristotelian exception. 'No one chooses to have sacked Troy' (*EN* VI 2, 1139b5–7), because the past is inalterable: there is no authentic action without deliberation, and our deliberative material is future contingency. So the very possibility of virtuous endeavour and vicious shortcoming is predicated on our inhabiting the sublunary sphere of alternative possibilities.

Our fourth and final opposition is normative: rule and exception. Here we find ourselves all over the shop. Take Plato. Throughout the ethical and political dialogues, the superior individual psyche and community both manifest a high degree of moderate regularity: and one might casually think that this character emerges from their abiding by the rules, while the degenerate indulge in all manner of unpredictable, even freakish, wickedness. But simply to equate correct behaviour with rule-bound behaviour is, as we shall shortly see, to beg some of the most pressing questions in this area. We are not at liberty to assume that the right reason which presides over the city of Kallipolis and the souls of those who guard it is made right by conforming to a set of rules, that what is not governed by rules is *ipso facto* irrational: once most carefully educated folk are in power—no mean feat!—they are to be left to

get on with governing, at their collective discretion. Now were we to assume that all and only rules might be designated 'laws', we should be obliged to concede that however it stands with the *Republic*, the *Statesman* pours vehement scorn on the very notion that rationality is nothing but accordance with rules: for the ideal statesman, in ideal circumstances, does not function first and foremost as a legislator. But then again, I know of no text which values laws so fervently in their capacity of divine reason as the *Laws*. Thus different bits of the Platonic corpus are indeterminate on, scornful of and enthusiastic about the proposition that because the best sort of rule embodies reason, obedience to it is at least partially definitive of reason as such. Inasmuch as he never adopts anything approaching the extremism of the *Statesman* on the political front, Aristotle is a staunch friend of the laws, and his ideal statesman is first and foremost a *nomomthetês*, a legislator. But inasmuch as the *phronimos* is, as it were, a rule unto himself and the rest of us, a paragon whose exemplary beliefs and decisions are uncodifiable in the strict sense, on the ethical front Aristotle would seem to be ancient philosophy's most prominent opponent of the very idea that morality depends on derivation of particular directives from general principles.

Since the arrangement I have generated is anything but neat, doesn't my procedure smack of the perverse? No. However irregular and problematic the patterns into which these grand oppositions fall, whichever valence, positive or negative, our philosophers attribute to one or another member of the oppositional pairs, we shall find on inspection that these patterns can form a matrix for the isolation of some fascinating Platonic and Aristotelian insights and arguments; and, on a less upbeat note, we might also come to suspect that in some ways the patterns also form a locus for oversight and obfuscation.

But I am likely to deserve a crisp Socratic rebuke: for I have been nattering on as if I know perfectly well what a rule is, while the fact of the matter is that, were I challenged to formulate a definition of 'rule', I should be at a loss to come up with anything remotely adequate. And, of course, since the concept of an exception is derived from that of a rule which is somehow breached, or abrogated, or in abeyance and so forth, rules and exceptions are equally comprehensible or opaque. In at least partial mitigation of my floundering about, let me cite David Lewis on 'rule': 'we seem to be dealing with an especially messy cluster concept, and one in which the relative importance of different conditions varies with the subject matter, with the contrasts one wants to make, and with one's

philosophical preconceptions.¹ This much I can and should say, for my immediate purposes: since our opposition is normative, we are not thinking of 'rule' in the sense of a neutral generalisation, be it exceptionless or statistical, as in 'as a rule, specialists in ancient philosophy are extraordinarily charming'. The rules with which we shall be concerned are supposed to bind, whether they be injunctions or prohibitions. They are not to be infringed unless by express permission of a proper authority, so that the exception proves the rule, or the agent who has broken the rule is able to produce a legitimate explanation of the infringement. Furthermore, they must be accessible. By 'accessibility' I mean two kinds of condition. First, it must be possible to apprehend the rules. Now given how messy our cluster concept is, I do not intend to provide even a broad brush sketch of what it is to learn a rule, if only because there is enough on my agenda without broaching the Wittgensteinian enigma of rule-following. Second, it must be possible to apply the rules. General applicability does not entail automatic, facile application of the rules; I am not committed to the non-existence of cases that are hard on account of being borderline, very tricky, etc.; and there are plenty of rules which are not mechanical algorithms—although there are rules which are just that, or approximations to such algorithms. What is excluded is our permanently gesturing at some mysterious rule which abides forever undiscovered and inarticulable. Why 'permanently'? Because sometimes it is reasonable of us to assume that a rule is in operation, even if it is now beyond our ken. For example, the success of David Marr's computational theory of vision strongly suggests that the workings of neural systems rely on all manner of computational processes which researchers have yet to work out.²

If all this seems, at best, to verge on the platitudinous, here are two countervailing considerations. First, in a domain so beset by crowding difficulties, it is no bad thing to acknowledge the safely obvious. Second, I have framed my criteria for something's being a rule with an eye to our going right or wrong; but we must not forget that according to Platonic and Aristotelian texts, normative rules extend beyond the sphere of human morality, although my criteria require some adaptation to accommodate the extension. I think that by the lights of the *Phaedo*, that phenomenal items strive to resemble their ideal exemplars is not a brute or neutral fact. What about accessibility? The Aristotelian natural scientist

¹ Lewis 1969, 105.

² One might query whether this is the sort of *normative* rule I have been discussing: yes, if descriptions of such biological processes are teleological.

investigates kinds which reliably, as a rule and for the most part, display various propensities; while these dispositions might temporarily lie latent or frustrated, or somehow, in certain circumstances, give rise to aberrant manifestations, over time their true nature will prove discernible.³

And what about application? This question calls for special caution. Since the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* is, as it were, a divine craftsman, then if a Platonic craft involves the application of rules, we are entitled to a doubly-qualified conclusion: namely, that the Demiurge works to rules, albeit he might be a fiction, and any which way, he only resembles a *technitês*. And satisfaction of the antecedent is far from certain. For in a famous passage from the *Republic*, Socrates likens the philosophical rulers' efforts to make a virtuous city to those of the artist who constantly glances back and forth between original and copy, rubbing out and drawing again to achieve a better likeness.⁴ When it comes to making, one must distinguish between rules guiding the constructive process itself and rules governing product design. But whatever the residual obscurities of the *Republic's* metaphor—and they are considerable—one thing, at least, is tolerably clear: these ideal artists are not engaged in anything like 'paint by numbers', they do not seem to be paying heed to either sort of putative creative rule for making an imitation. So, I guess, neither (*mutatis mutandis*) would the Demiurge: a paradigm is a particular, so that if one is striving to copy it as accurately as possible, generalisations might well not be what one should reach for.

By definition, Aristotelian natural objects are not propagated by *technê*; but in parallel we have no reason to suppose that Aristotle, who freely ascribes knowledge to the *technitês*, assumes that technical expertise is conditional on following the rules of a craft. He consults, not an extramundane Form, but rather a form within his mind, to be instantiated in an artefact (*Metaphysics* Z 7, 1032a32–b14). Prior to instantiation, the form of house in the builder's soul is both particular—a token in *him*—and generic—he has recourse to that same form when he comes to build *any* house (of that given kind). This conception of making might seem to lend itself quite readily to analysis in terms of rules: for if the mental form is given external reality, does that not come about as the

³ On this aspect of Aristotelian science see Wardy 2005.

⁴ Ἐπειτα, οἶμαι, ἀπεργαζόμενοι πυκνὰ ἂν ἐκατέρωσ' ἀποβλέποιεν, πρὸς τε τὸ φύσει δίκαιον καὶ καλὸν καὶ σῶφρον καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα, καὶ πρὸς ἐκείνῳ αὐτὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐμποιοῖεν ... καὶ τὸ μὲν ἂν, οἶμαι, ἐξαλείφοιεν, τὸ δὲ πάλιν ἐγγράφοιεν, ἕως ὅτι μάλιστα ἀνθρώπεια ἦθη εἰς ὅσον ἐνδέχεται θεοφιλῇ ποιήσειαν (*Republic* VI, 501b1–c3).

maker reduces the general to the particular by dint of following a recipe for the imposition of form on matter? No. Aristotle specifies that the form in the soul is 'the essence and the primary substance' (1032b1–2): but so far from asserting that *to ti ên einai* is a *logos* from which one might read off a formula prescribing a succession of technical steps, instead he defines the thought of the maker as a heuristic sequence culminating in a final discovery which will become the initial move in the process of creation (1032b6–9). Now technical deliberation so conceived is closely related to moral deliberation; but, as we shall verify, Aristotelian moral deliberation does not proceed through the application of general principles to particular cases.

A mistake to avoid. One might reason as follows: 'sure, Plato and Aristotle impose what, by modern standards, are severe limits on accessibility and applicability, whether in science or in the productive arts. If, in the *Timaeus*, there are no rules for the literal or metaphorical making of the natural world, then by the same token our apprehension of such good order as that world enjoys will also not come from recognition of natural laws; if there are cosmic regularities, they are not what we would consider proper nomic ones, they are thrown up, as it were, by mathematical artistry of a supernatural order. Aristotle looks to be in much better nick; but since he insists that natural teleology functions only *hôs epi to polu*, the phenomenal *explananda* retain an ineliminable residue of the inexplicable—to put it somewhat flippantly and coarsely, in the Aristotelian world, shit happens. Whence these severe limits? Both Plato and Aristotle adhere to a conception of the material which dictates that in and of itself, *hulê* is recalcitrant to the imposition of form; thus inherent in the Platonic phenomena and in the Aristotelian sublunary is an anarchic element, disobedient to law as such. We do not subscribe to this antique model'. Where is the mistake? Contemporary philosophy of science yields strong and persuasive arguments to the effect that all scientific laws hold only *ceteribus paribus*;⁵ therefore it is far from clear that

⁵ '... if the topic is *laws* in the traditional empiricist sense of claims about necessary patterns of regular association, we have *ceteris paribus* laws all the way down: laws hold only relative to the chance set-up that generate them.

What basic science aims for, whether in physics or economics, is not primarily to discover laws but to find out what stable capacities are associated with features and structures in their domains, and how these capacities behave in complex settings' (Cartwright 1999, 176). To be sure, since Cartwright champions a scientific particularism which would bear meaningful comparison with e.g. Dancy's moral particularism (as he recognises (Dancy 2000, 152 n. 21)), she might be too controversial to press into service; but the same could not be said of Marc Lange, who asserts: 'laws of nature

the scope of Platonic or Aristotelian physical laws is unduly restricted. It is rather the ironic case that in some instances an opening for nomic generalisation might have been overlooked, on account of an exaggerated stringency in the ancient conception of what makes for the best sort of law, as if the *hōs epi to polu* is merely the humble cousin of the grandly exceptionless.

So much by way of setting agendas, assembling puzzles and, I hope, executing a useful task of preliminary conceptual cartography. Next we shall look at the *Statesman* on the topic of the unsatisfactory status of general prescriptions as a guide in life. This solely as a point of departure; not that this part of the dialogue lacks intrinsic interest—far from it—but rather because my focus in this study is on Aristotle, and Aristotle himself reacts to the teaching of the *Statesman*.⁶ Then we shall move on to the Aristotelian theory of equity, which takes us beyond rules in a certain sense. Then we shall inspect Aristotle on the moral vision of the *phronimos*, a theory which would seem to dispense with rules altogether. In conclusion we shall turn our attention to Aristotle on legislating for the good, where we shall find that the doctrine that the wisdom of the *phronimos* is uncodifiable is in tension with Aristotle's programme for the cultivation of virtue in the body politic.

‘... For the dissimilarities between human beings and their actions, and the fact that practically nothing in human affairs ever remains stable, prevent any kind of expertise whatsoever from making any simple decision⁷ in any sphere that covers all cases and will last for all time’ (Rowe 2005).⁸ Plato will have his little joke: note that this sweeping denial of the possibility of reaching a technical verdict which holds good generally is itself, apart from the minimal qualification of ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, ‘practically’, an uncircumscribed negative generalisation. Presumably philosophy, or at any rate philosophy in its dialectical capacity as here demonstrated by

have traditionally been regarded as constituted by or at least manifested in exceptionless regularities ... I argue that this view is mistaken; rather, a law of nature is associated with an inference rule that is “reliable”—accurate enough for certain purposes, though perhaps not perfectly truth-preserving’ (Lange 2000, viii).

⁶ Cf. Devereux 1986, 501.

⁷ Preferable to both ‘unqualified rules’ (Skemp and Ostwald 1992) and ‘a simple rule’ (Annas and Waterfield 1995), which jump the gun somewhat.

⁸ αἱ γὰρ ἀνομοιότητες τῶν τε ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τὸ μηδέποτε μηδὲν ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἡσυχίαν ἄγειν τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων οὐδὲν ἑῶσιν ἀπλοῦν ἐν οὐδενὶ περὶ πάντων καὶ ἐπὶ πάντα τὸν χρόνον ἀποφαίνεσθαι τέχνην οὐδ’ ἡντινοῦν (*Statesman* 294b2–6).

the Eleatic Stranger, is not a *technê* in the business of intervention; otherwise the denial is unmotivated, extreme and utterly implausible. For example, one should have thought that the non-prescriptive observation ‘humans denied all food will eventually die’ is a pretty safe bet. However, can we not take any such generalisation and derive from it one or another corresponding prescription—for example, ‘if you want your human flock to survive, don’t starve it’? Yes: but what the *Statesman* has in mind is a restriction on expertise, not a denial of all normative generalisation, expert and non-expert alike. No one needs to be told that food is necessary for life. Mature experience is required for the conviction that a mixed diet keeps us healthy; and possession of dietetics is required for knowledge of why a mixed diet is a good thing. The expert dietician might be able to assess my constitution, age, lifestyle and so forth so as to prescribe a fitting diet; but, if it really is tailored precisely to my needs, it won’t quite fit anyone else, or me any longer as I age and as my circumstances change.

Questions and objections. Does the conjunction ‘human beings and their actions’ not suggest that the Stranger’s emphasis falls squarely on *praxis*, rendering my medical example inappropriate? No. First, τέχνην οὐδ’ ἡντινοῦν is explicitly universal. Second, the myth would appear to imply a metaphysical thesis maintaining that radical, almost chaotic variability is, if I might be permitted my own little joke, the rule rather than the exception in the here and now. It follows that to speak of ‘local knowledge’ and mean by that knowledge worthy of the name might be to misspeak; but that would hardly come as a shock to the reader of Platonic dialogues. Second, in their different ways the *Gorgias*, the *Republic*, the *Statesman* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* all employ the examples of medicine, physical training and navigation in a fashion which takes for granted that whatever features of these *technai*, their reputation and so forth are at issue can also be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in statescraft: it too is a *technê*, and the world at once offers opportunities for and circumscribes applications of technical skill, which openings and limitations are, at a high generic level, of a kind.⁹

The idea is that the sheer fluidity of life entails that every individual person individually circumstanced is bound to constitute an exception, even perhaps a glaring one, to most any judgement which is either a gen-

⁹ Not quite the same kind in all these texts, but that doesn’t matter for our purposes. And not at all the same kind of statescraft in the Platonic dialogues and the *Nicomachean Ethics*—which will come to matter.

eralisation¹⁰ or, if it starts off as a bespoke, correctly particularised judgement, is allowed to fossilise into a no longer sufficiently nice proposition. But what, precisely, does οὐδὲν ἔῳσιν ἀπλοῦν rule out for rules? The *Statesman* is certainly not saying that unadulterated expertise is a theoretical impossibility: so if in such-and-such a particular case the expert gets it bang on, are they latching onto a generalisation sufficiently fine-grained for this case? That is, are we to suppose that there is nothing wrong with generalities as such; or even indeed, that they are inescapable, since expertise just is having at one's command an ample supply of useful rules to be exploited at need? Or is it that the expert is, as it were, a pure particularist, who just sees what is needed? That would not seem to be a promising option: for were things that way, the one who can cope with all that mutability might well be an invaluable resource, but should not count as an 'expert', since on neither the Platonic conception of *technê* nor ours of 'expertise' does such a one, who cannot explain these one-offs and thus cannot justify individual calls or transmit skill, count as in possession of any veritable know-how. Or is that a mistaken conclusion: might such a one take on an apprentice who matures into another master on the basis of repeated demonstration of success, the set of exemplifications somehow being well-formed without its being possible to read off from it a set of inductive principles?¹¹ Evidently to presuppose in this context that explanation requires a fund of generalisations would be to beg the question flagrantly. Or, finally, is it that the expert is one who does draw on such principles to get it right; but that exploiting one's helpful rules is a matter of seeing that this is a such-and-such; and seeing this *as* a such-and-such is a cognitive act which *uses* rules, but cannot be reduced to *following* them?¹² And accordingly picking up the expertise incorporates both a systematic schooling in the principles and demonstrative exemplification. Yet how, exactly, would one elucidate using, but not following, a rule?

¹⁰ Again, inexpert generalisations along the lines of 'people must eat to survive' are not at issue.

¹¹ Resembling the medical empiricist versions of *technê* and *epilogismos* (e.g. Sextus *M.* VIII 291)—all premised, of course, on non-dogmatic mnemonic associations, and so never adding up to 'inductive principles': just 'what seems to get the job done'.

¹² '... everything hangs on whether what it is to follow a rule and what it is to know a rule are understood as the grasp of a universal generalisation from which knowledge of particular instances is derived, or as the knowledge of how to respond to paradigm instances, with an appropriate but perhaps inarticulate ability to generalise' (Garfield 2000, 178).

‘Eleatic Stranger: But we see law bending itself more or less towards this very thing, like some self-willed and ignorant person, who allows no one to do anything contrary to what he orders, nor to ask any questions, not even if after all something new turns out for someone which is better, contrary to the prescription which he himself has laid down.

Young Socrates: True; the law does simply as you have just said with regard to each and every one of us.

E.S.: Then it is impossible for what is perpetually simple to be useful in relation to what is never simple?

Y.S.: Very likely’ (Rowe 2005).¹³

The Stranger’s comparison smacks of rhetorical dodginess. The *nomos* is not a man; therefore we should not slide complacently from the fact that in the circumstance described human inflexibility would prove regrettably wayward to the presumption that a static law in this situation merits comparable condemnation—one might moderately speculate that people and laws have complementary advantages and disadvantages. One is put in mind of a piece of mirror image rhetoric: the cuckold Euphiletus, on the point of doing in Eratosthenes, the adulterer who has wronged him, cunningly portrays himself as handing over his weapon to the *nomos* of Athens which itself extracts condign punishment—or rather it is Lysias who makes the cunning substitution on behalf of his client, so as to elide the dangerous worry that Euphiletus has simply murdered a fellow citizen.¹⁴ The Stranger shifts into reverse: by distinguishing between the *nomos* and the specific occasion for its application, ἡ ἑαυτοῦ τάξις, the personification loads the law with all the unattractive attributes of an irrational, primitive preference for one’s own over what is not only better, but even manifestly, perspicuously so. If the personified laws of the *Crito* explain and argue even as they scold, the *nomos* of the *Statesman*, which brooks no questions, is the very antithesis of both the dialectician receptive to interrogation and respectful of rational resistance and the laws of the *Laws*, decked out as they are with justificatory prefaces.

¹³ ΞΕ. Τὸν δέ γε νόμον ὁρῶμεν σχεδὸν ἐπ’ αὐτὸ τοῦτο συντείνοντα, ὥσπερ τινὰ ἀνθρώπον αὐθάδη καὶ ἀμαθῆ καὶ μηδὲνα μηδὲν ἑῶντα ποιεῖν παρὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τάξιν, μηδ’ ἐπερωτᾶν μηδένα, μηδ’ ἂν τι νέον ἄρα τῷ συμβαίνει βέλτιον παρὰ τὸν λόγον δν αὐτὸς ἐπέταξεν.

ΝΕ. ΣΩ. Ἀληθῆ· ποιεῖ γὰρ ἀτεχνῶς καθάπερ εἰρηκας νῦν ὁ νόμος ἡμῖν ἐκάστοις.

ΞΕ. Οὐκοῦν ἀδύνατον εἶ ἔχειν πρὸς τὰ μηδέποτε ἀπλᾶ τὸ διὰ παντὸς γιγνόμενον ἀπλοῦν;

ΝΕ. ΣΩ. Κινδυνεύει. (*Statesman* 294b8–c9).

¹⁴ Lysias I 26.

‘... not even if after all something new turns out for someone which is better, contrary to the prescription which he himself has laid down’: so Rowe. Skemp and Ostwald have ‘... even if the situation has shown some marked improvement on the one for which he originally legislated’ (Skemp and Ostwald 1992); Waterfield, ‘... even if the situation has in fact changed and it turns out to be better for someone to contravene these rules’ (Annas and Waterfield 1995). I tentatively propose a significantly different gloss: take *τι νέον ἄρα τῷ συμβαίνει βέλτιον*, ‘something new and better occurs to someone’, as further implying that the person so placed sees the difference; that is, what the Stranger envisions is not merely an alteration in the circumstances which the law had not foreseen and for which it is inadequate, but rather there also being another *ἄνθρωπος* who pits his superior intelligence against the dimly stubborn *νόμος ἄνθρωπος*. (This is a gloss rather than a strict rendering on two counts. First, my ‘occurs to’ is epistemological (= ‘comes to see’), while the Greek properly supports only ‘it happens to someone’; thus ‘comes to see’ would have to be inferred. Second, when the phrase recurs, *συμβαίνοντων ἄλλων βελτιόνων τοῖς κάμνουσι*, 295c8, it is not for the person so placed to form an independent view: shortly we shall attend to this contrasting passage.) In this scenario there is special point to *βέλτιον παρὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν αὐτὸς ἐπέταξεν*. The final part of the *Protagoras* seeks to demonstrate the incoherence of the supposition that one might go against what one acknowledges is best. Here in the *Statesman* it is as if the intelligent person tyrannised by the unintelligent law is in the most unfortunate position of being trapped by an irrationality which is coherent. That is, unlike the *Protagoras*, what we have here is not a single *logos* which cannot simultaneously embrace incompatible rank orderings, but rather two distinct *logoi*, of which the superior is at the mercy of the inferior.

‘Then it is impossible for what is perpetually simple to be useful in relation to what is never simple?’¹⁵ I imagine that ‘simple’ in this context is equivalent to ‘unqualified’. Why should law be ‘perpetually’ or ‘unremittingly’ so? Two doubts. First, one can always complicate a rule by adding proviso clauses allowing for variations which escaped the original.¹⁶ Needless to say, the new rule will itself be a generalisation

¹⁵ Cf. ‘Well, it’s impossible for something which is unremittingly simple to cope well with things which are never simple, isn’t it?’ (Annas and Waterfield 1995).

¹⁶ Questions of rules and exceptions have curious connections with the theory of conditionals. To ‘are there any generalisations which are not only true and exceptionless, but also substantive / useful / powerful ...?’ corresponds ‘find a substantive / useful / powerful ... and true conditional of the form “if p, then q” for which all conditionals of

susceptible to yet further exceptions;¹⁷ but the fact is that the Stranger's phrasing τὸ διὰ παντὸς γιγνόμενον ἀπλοῦν might be criticised for skating over the possibility of nomic complication, refusing to admit that simplicity comes in degrees—unless, that is, we were to paraphrase and embellish it as 'the relatively complicated *remains* simple in all cases'. Which brings me to my second question. I do not pretend that the qualified rule is guaranteed to meet our needs—on the side of the user, it might be awfully cumbersome, and on the side of what it is used on, the exceptional might continue to swamp us—but how is one to eliminate *a priori* the possibility that this time, on these occasions, the law was up to the job? After all, it is not as if every individuating characteristic of each and every one of us is pertinent all the time to how we should best be treated: that would be a doctrine of crazy particularism, a vision of a world of one-offs whose similarities never cut deep enough to be of any help.

I can think of two answers to this objection: if I lack textual evidence for them, at least there does not seem to be evidence against. The Stranger might concede that his universal generalisation that laws are necessarily inadequate has exceptions, but then contend that the exceptions are few and far between, and small beer: by *ta anthrôpina* he really meant human affairs on a scale and of a complexity guaranteed in advance to defeat any rule. Then again, the Stranger could take another, methodological, tack. He might say that it is not as if the rule might not look as if it captures one instance or another; and that the appearance is not specious, if by 'capture' one means register all relevant features, where, indeed, not all features are relevant. Furthermore, the Stranger might also concede that were one to apply the rule, the correct answer would pop out. So where is the problem? The idea would be that while for a certain range of cases what a rule dictates and what right reason delivers happen to be extensionally equivalent, that equivalence is superficial; again, the

the form "if p, then even if r, still q" are true'; with the parallel in the logic of arguments of identifying those which either become or remain valid, depending on whether one supplies an extra premiss. I cannot trace these ramifications here.

¹⁷ Cf. "The 'more or less' [σχέδον, 294b8] probably acknowledges the slight overstatement; of course law can itself recognise the possibility of exceptions (though these too must be on a general level, so that E.S.'s broad characterisation will still hold)' (Rowe 2005, 223). 'The function of *ceteris paribus* clauses ... is not to mark something else that might be equal, and that when filled in would make inference deductive rather than defeasible; it is, rather, to mark nonmonotonicity in inference' (Millgram 2005, 17).

best kind of thought is not nomic. If this seem excessively abstract, it is no more so than much of what the Stranger does actually say in the dialogue.

‘E.S.: Do you think he would not propose other prescriptions, contrary to the ones he had written down, when things turned out to be different, and better, for his patients because of winds or else some other of the things that come from Zeus which had turned out contrary to expectation, in some way differently from the usual pattern, and he would obstinately think that neither he nor the patient should step outside those ancient laws that had once been laid down, he himself by giving other instructions, the patient by daring to do different things contrary to what was written down, on the grounds that these were the rules of the art of medicine and of health, and that things that happened differently were unhealthy and not part of his expertise; or would all things of this kind, if they happened in the context of truly expert knowledge, in all spheres cause altogether the greatest ridicule, for acts of legislation of this sort?

Y.S.: Absolutely right’ (Rowe 2005).¹⁸

The doctor in this example also stands proxy for all other experts, including the knowledgeable political legislator, who prescribe or proscribe on behalf of the non-experts in their care. Whenever an expert designs a set of rules—and such a design might be obligatory¹⁹—the general injunctions will, on occasion, fall short of what would be most appropriate for some individual: inevitably so, for the law code is drawn up ‘according to the principle of “for the majority of the people, for

¹⁸ ΞΕ. ἄρ’ οὐκ ἂν παρ’ ἐκεῖνα τὰ γράμματα τολμήσειεν ἄλλ’ ὑποθέσθαι, συμβαινόντων ἄλλων βελτιόνων τοῖς κάμνουσι διὰ πνεύματα ἢ τι καὶ ἄλλο παρὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τῶν ἐκ Διὸς ἐτέρως πως τῶν εἰωθότων γενόμενα, καρτερῶν δ’ ἂν ἡγοῖτο δεῖν μὴ ἐκβαίνειν τὰρχαῖά ποτε νομοθετηθέντα μήτε αὐτὸν προοστήπτοντα ἄλλα μήτε τὸν κάμνοντα ἕτερα τολμῶντα παρὰ τὰ γραφέντα δοῶν, ὥς ταῦτα ὄντα ἱατρικὰ καὶ ὑγιεινά, τὰ δὲ ἐτέρως γιγνόμενα νοσώδη τε καὶ οὐκ ἔντεχνα· ἢ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον ἔν γε ἐπιστήμῃ συμβαῖνον καὶ ἀληθεῖ τέχνῃ περὶ ἅπαντα παντάπασι γέλως ἂν ὁ μέγιστος γίγνοιτο τῶν τοιούτων νομοθετημάτων;

NE. ΣΩ. Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν (*Statesman* 295c8–e3).

¹⁹ ‘... since the power to control each person at each instant is a conceptual chimera (whereas the kingly science is not), one can conclude that anyone who has the kingly science would have to have recourse to legislation’ (Brunschiwig 1996a, 128 n. 18); and ‘... it was nowhere said that rule *had* to be without laws, only that whether or not a constitution was based on laws had no relevance to its correctness or otherwise—and it turns out that there will certainly be circumstances under which the ideal ruler will need to use written laws (though he will feel no obligation to stick to them ...)’ (Rowe 2005, 223).

the majority of cases, and roughly, somehow, like this”’ (Rowe 2005).²⁰ But when things are at their best—when, that is, genuine experts are at hand and in control—they may lay down the law in the sense of exerting authoritative influence over their charges, but are nowise stymied or trammelled by superstitious respect for their own general pronouncements; that is, the fully competent doctor here in his attitude towards the rules of medicine is set up by Plato as the opposite of the incompetent, personified *nomos*. Now expert and patient work together harmoniously. We might best think of this in terms of Aristotelian empiricism. I know on the basis of experience that something strictly forbidden to people with my medical condition does not harm me; but this confidence, while warranted by my experiences, is not scientific: for me it is just a brute fact that I am unusual. The doctor, on the other hand, will understand why I buck the trend, and, as likely as not, be able to turn whatever underlying peculiarities are responsible for my immunity to my further advantage: the *orthê doxa* of the one and the *epistêmê* of the other are mutually supportive, since that I really am odd might well not have come to light, had I not discovered this for myself and formed an untutored conviction to report to the expert.

So far so good: indeed, I fail to see how one could not nod one’s agreement together with Young Socrates to that great rarity in a Platonic dialogue, a piece of plain common sense. But we have not progressed very far; and we shall make our transition to Aristotle by mulling over the two principal themes whose finer outlines are still indistinct. First, what is it about the human situation, and perhaps the human being in the larger world, that renders unconditional reliance on rules, even the very best ones, *faute de mieux* for the inexperienced? Second, and complementarily, what is it about *epistêmê* or *technê alêthês* which propels its possessor beyond the need for reliance on rules, however refined?

The vast majority of rules are defeasible: to balk at making that concession would be tantamount to the intransigence of the personified *nomos* which is blind to change and interprets questioning as insurrection. Rule-following is *faute de mieux* for the inexperienced only if a complex condition obtains. We must be persuaded not only of nomic defeasibility as some sort of conceptual or physical possibility, but also that laws, at least most or the most important or potentially most useful, are actually defeated much of the time. What does the *Statesman* offer by way of satisfying

²⁰ τὸ τοῖς πολλοῖς γε οἶμαι καὶ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ καὶ πῶς οὕτως ἐκαστοῖς τὸν νόμον θήσκει (*Statesman* 295a4–5: cf. *Laws* IX, 875d3–5).

this condition? The Eleatic Stranger baldly asserts two contributory theses and perhaps also implicitly helps himself to a third: that the cases of interest to us exhibit variations of a kind and to a degree which ensure that laws of ambitious scope will always be riddled with exceptions, and their refinements not appreciably less defective; that there is not only all this synchronic variability, but it is also compounded by major diachronic variation; third and implicitly, that the rate of variation is intense. His adherence to the first two theses is clear from the quotations which I have provided; as for the third, in its absence his position is vulnerable to the objection that given time and patience enough, a sufficiently scrupulous and sensitive investigator might be capable of mastering even the formidable range of heterogeneous cases generated by the first two assumptions.²¹ So far as I can tell the *Statesman* has nothing to offer the disobliging reader who does not concede one or another of these propositions; and even invocation of the metaphysics of transcendental Forms and phenomenal participants will not, I think, make much of a difference, for there are too many versions of the metaphysics for us to batten onto a single formulation entailing the three theses. I conclude that variation and variability intractable to pursuit of a rule-following strategy are simply the *donnée* of the dialogue: the *Statesman* asks how an expert copes if things are like that, it does not establish that they are.

And with this backdrop assumed, how is it that rule-following is *faute de mieux* for only the inexpert? One speculative reply concentrates on variability: such is the unstable dynamism of affairs that the ability to identify and seize crucial opportunities for effective action, to know and take advantage of the *kairos*, is the preserve of the knower (305d2–4).²² This is another instance of ‘fine so far as it goes.’ Grant the assumptions of the *Statesman*, and we have the conditional that ‘if there is expertise, it will wield power by virtue of its mastery of timing.’ This might be a sufficient condition; and it would be explanatory rather than superficial (‘by virtue of’). Where it does not take us is to any deeper insight into what it might be like to achieve such mastery—unless indeed this is a particularistic capacity transmittable to the progressing learner, but

²¹ Cf. ‘to be conclusive, the polemical definition of law must be combined with a stipulation about time: to wit, that the flow of time brings with it dissimilarities rather than similarities ... time is conceived as a succession of particulars, each dissimilar from the next. This Heraclitean image immediately poses the problem of the very intelligibility of particulars to reason’ (Lane 1998, 199).

²² ‘That knowledge [the second-order control which statecraft exercises over the other arts] is knowledge of timing’ (Lane 1998, 142).

incommunicable to the disengaged and inexpert.²³ Here perhaps we might think to glimpse at least a formal resemblance to the transcendentalism of the *Republic*: in both dialogues dialectical and political competence is gestured at rather than substantively articulated.

But this would be incorrect, and for a reason which might pull against our first speculation. If Socrates, the best dialectician in the *Republic*, adverts to dialectical accomplishments beyond his competence, there is no reason to suspect that the Eleatic Stranger of the *Statesman* is anything less than the perfect dialectician, in control of the perfect method of collection and division;²⁴ and however it might be with other experts, the statesman will be philosophical, if not a philosopher on duty.²⁵ True, mastery of timing is an *applied* science, dealing in what is measurable 'with regard to the coming into being of due measure' (πρὸς τὴν τοῦ μετρίου γένεσιν, 284c1), and striving for 'due measure, what is fitting, the appropriate opportunity and what is needed' (τὸ μέτριον καὶ τὸ πρέπον καὶ τὸν καιρὸν καὶ τὸ δέον, 284e6–7): in the first instance the job description summons up keen empirical observation of particular developments. However, this eye must be not only watchful, but also knowing; therefore timing, if really skilful, had better not divorce fine awareness of what is happening from theoretical understanding of its nature and value, and such understanding is only to be had from philosophy. Therefore the supreme *technê* taking one beyond laws certainly includes as an underpinning scientific knowledge of the relations which naturally structure one and many, particular and general. But if a subsidiary component, the results of which are applied rather than derived or explored,

²³ Are we not (nearly) all in this situation *vis-à-vis* our mother tongues? We have learnt how to speak them, and can 'teach' our children to speak them as well: but most of us haven't a clue how this works, and, were we confronted with a 'disengaged' subject—say a deaf child, or one past the 'lalling' stage—we wouldn't know how to proceed. Perhaps contrast acquisition of a second language, which might seem (more like) a proper *technê*: a traditional foreign language course positively bristles with rules, grammatical and otherwise—but one might argue that the successful learner does not so much continue to obey such prescriptions as eventually dispense with them altogether. Cf. Murdoch 1970, 89–90.

²⁴ Were at least some considerable stretches of the exercise with Young Socrates parodic, then the gap between the *Republic* and the *Statesman* would narrow: the latter would still actually contain a fully qualified dialectician, unlike the former, but neither would offer us a (complete) demonstration of the ultimate mastery.

²⁵ So put to accommodate Lane's distinction: 'le politique est un philosophe au sens où il possède une connaissance philosophique, mais ce n'est pas un philosophe si la question est de savoir comment il est le mieux défini. Car il est mieux défini, précisément, comme un politique' (Lane 2005, 338; cf. 343).

it is dialectic nevertheless which guarantees that the practical *metrêtikê* wielded by the expert is a real *science*; and this begins to sound rather more like one of the models of expertise scouted above, on which one moves between principle and particular without that movement following a rule.²⁶ One sees that collection and division is not a stupid taxonomic drill, executed mechanically; but, notoriously, it is awfully hard to see much more than that. Furthermore, such dialectic produces systematic understanding; and that, even if relegated to the background when *metrêtikê* is in operation, threatens to sit ill with the particularistic cast of our first reply. So much for the cryptic indications of the *Statesman*.

One might be inclined to look to the institutions of justice for a protected haven wherein general ethical principles and the laws flowing from them are maintained: for unperturbed laws must apply to all alike, and must therefore of their very nature be couched as impersonal generalities, so as to avoid favouritism on behalf or to the disadvantage of given individuals. Evidently this is a necessary, not a sufficient condition, as unfair legislation might prejudicially single out entire ethnic or socioeconomic groups. This is a sound intuition, but some distinctions are called for. The intuition is strongest when the penal law is in question: equal punishment ought to be meted out to malefactors, regardless of their characteristics irrelevant to the crimes they have committed. However, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* Aristotle is especially preoccupied with constitutional arrangements designed to educate the citizenry and foster virtue; and here the connection between impartiality and generality is more tenuous. True, justice might demand something like equality of access (think of Socrates' provisions in the *Republic* for the promotion or demotion of infants between classes); but,

²⁶ '... the philosopher is able, not just to take the synoptic view of the field he discerns, but also to pick out individual points in it: collection and division both systematises and individuates ... the method of collection and division, the true method of philosophy, just by value of its evaluative component is itself a teleological science ... *such an expertise readily lends itself to accurate judgement in individual cases, because the very points of division are determined—or judged—teleologically*. So one who had such an expertise would be ideally suited to practise the judgements of equity which the ES says are central to any proper account of the statesman's knowledge (249a ff.); and those individual judgements are only properly practised by someone with such expert knowledge' (McCabe 1997, 114, emphasis added). McCabe's suggestive reading might, if expanded, go very much further towards assuaging the puzzlement I have voiced; but without additional explanation of what 'teleological determination' might come to, the reading tantalises without satisfying.

if the inculcation of virtue is, at its best, responsive to peculiarities of mind and temperament—as Aristotle supposes—educational regulations might amount to little more than rough templates for thoroughly individualistic tuition.

Be that as it may—for now, that is: the educational issue will dominate the conclusion of this study—as against those who attach legal impartiality very tightly to the impersonality of the law (e.g. the *Laws*), Aristotle does not evince any discomfort at forging the most intimate association between judicial institutions and the (upright) judge: ‘to go to the judge is to go to what is just; for the judge wants to be justice animated, as it were.’²⁷ And an equitable *nomos*, to be equitable, must anticipate that circumstances will arise in which adherence to the strict letter of the law will result in injustice. Thus the occasion for Aristotle’s much-lauded theory of equity: ‘the equitable is just: not the kind in accordance with law, but rather as a corrective to legal justice. The reason is that law is universal as a whole, but is not capable of pronouncing universally and correctly about some cases.’²⁸ The *Statesman* is and is not in the picture: Aristotle neither infers that, if only it were possible, the rule of law ought to be dispensed with,²⁹ nor does he add that the need for equitable adjustments to alleviate the imperfections of universal *nomoi* is insistent: for all that he says, such mismatch occurs so infrequently that exceptions to these legal rules might be truly exceptional.

‘And the law is no less correct; for the fault is in neither the law nor the lawgiver, but rather in the nature of the thing: for straight off such

²⁷ τὸ δ’ ἐπὶ τὸν δικαστὴν ἵεναι ἵεναι ἔστιν ἐπὶ τὸ δίκαιον· ὁ γὰρ δικαστὴς βούλεται εἶναι οἷον δίκαιον ἔμψυχον (*EN* V 4, 1132a20–22): my ‘wants to be’ is intended to bring out the teleological connotations of βούλεται εἶναι, rather than imputing any conscious intention to the judge (although this is not excluded). Broadie comments appositely: ‘the just as embodied in the judge or arbitrator is not the just of a given fair apportionment, but is the very institution of arbitration and going to arbitration’ (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 342).

²⁸ τὸ ἐπεικὲς δίκαιον μὲν ἔστιν, οὐ τὸ κατὰ νόμον δέ, ἀλλ’ ἐπανόρθωμα νομίμου δίκαιου. αἵτιον δ’ ὅτι ὁ μὲν νόμος καθόλου πᾶς, περὶ ἐνίων δ’ οὐχ οἷόν τε ὀρθῶς εἰπεῖν καθόλου (*EN* V 10, 1137b11–14).

²⁹ There would seem to be no alternative: ἐν οἷς οὖν ἀνάγκη μὲν εἰπεῖν καθόλου (*EN* V 10, 1137b14–15). *Politics* III 15–16, Aristotle’s most extensive engagement with the antinomianism of the *Statesman* (to which he nevertheless, and characteristically, does not refer in so many words), argues confidently for the superiority of the best laws over the best man: ‘he who bids that law rule seems to bid that god and reason rule alone; but he who bids that a man rule adds a beast as well’ (ὁ μὲν οὖν τὸν νόμον κελεύων ἄρχειν δοκεῖ κελεύειν τὸν θεὸν καὶ τὸν νοῦν μόνους, ὁ δ’ ἀνθρώπον κελεύων προστίθῃσι καὶ θηρίον, *Politics* III 16, 1287a28–30).

is the character of the matter of actions.³⁰ This confirms that Aristotle in no way denigrates legislation as inferior just because it is general, but is made to apply to divergent particulars. We might unwrap his remark as follows: judicial institutions, the practice of legislation and the handing down of particular judgements are essential features of civilised existence, not some poor expedient to which we resort in our ignorance. But we should not jump to the conclusion that the language of deficiency, *hamartêma*, absolves law and lawgiver of culpability by transferring the blame to ‘the matter of actions’, as if the very particularity of human situations were to be deprecated: oh, if only I were a universal! The point is rather that subsuming individual cases under general rules will eventually, inexorably, give rise to exceptions; the question now is whether to manage such exceptions rationally is to appeal to some other, perhaps superordinate, rule, or to somehow make good the problem posed by the exception without bringing in any rule at all.

‘So whenever the law pronounces universally, but something occurs on this occasion contrary to the universal, then in the respect in which the legislator overlooks and erred in speaking simply, it is right to make good the deficiency with what the legislator himself would have said had he been present here, and what he would have legislated, had he known.’³¹ To get this cardinal passage right we need to build up an exegesis attentive to its manifold subtleties; I borrow very freely from Jacques Brunschwig’s magnificent work on this subject. The first point is that ‘something occurs on this occasion contrary to the universal’ refers not to some indeterminacy in the law which leaves the judge uncertain as to whether or how it applies: rather his verdict must be an equitable one because the penalty which the law does propose in this instance would be unacceptably harsh, by the lights of not only the judge, but also the original legislator and other right-thinking people.³² The second point

³⁰ τὸ γὰρ ἀμάρτημα οὐκ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ οὐδ’ ἐν τῷ νομοθέτῃ ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ φύσει τοῦ πράγματός ἐστιν· εὐθὺς γὰρ τοιαύτῃ ἢ τῶν πρακτῶν ὕλη ἐστίν (EN V 10, 1137b17–19).

³¹ ὅταν οὖν λέγῃ μὲν ὁ νόμος καθόλου, συμβῇ δ’ ἐπὶ τούτου παρὰ τὸ καθόλου, τότε ὀρθῶς ἔχει, ἣ παραλείπει ὁ νομοθέτης καὶ ἡμάρτεν ἀπλῶς εἰπόν, ἐπανορθοῦν τὸ ἐλλειφθέν, ὃ καὶ ὁ νομοθέτης αὐτὸς ἂν εἶπεν ἐκεῖ παρών, καὶ εἰ ἦδει, ἐνομοθέτησεν (EN V 10, 1137b19–24).

³² ‘The cases where it is legitimate to make an appeal to equity are not, according to Aristotle, the cases where there is no existing legal code concerning that type of act; they are the cases where there exists a perfectly applicable law, but where a mechanical or blind application of it would result in a verdict which would be too severe according to

is that the legislator's omission is not a simple oversight.³³ That is, were one to quiz him at the time of legislation, he would not pretend that future application of the law will invariably produce a just verdict: he realises that there will be exceptions, although he cannot, of course, put his finger on them (cf. I know that some of my current beliefs are false, but cannot now identify them). The third point is that awareness that a case is exceptional does not of itself bring knowledge of how best to modify one's verdict: a judicious but puzzled judge might sense that what the law is saying in this case is inequitable, without knowing how to put things right.³⁴ The fourth point is that the judge whose realisation that something is amiss is capped by knowledge of how to fix it has not parted from the company of the lawgiver;³⁵ on the contrary: in successfully

the moral intuitions of the judge and those of the society in which he works'; and 'strictly speaking, the law does not manifest "gaps", but "deficiencies" in the etymological sense of the word, i.e. it "falls short"' (Brunschiwig 1996a, 139).

³³ At least not when his eye is on the generality of his legislation, as the companion text to *EN* V 10, *Rhetoric* I 13, tells us in discriminating between anticipated and unanticipated cases where *epieikeia* will be required: 'the equitable is what is just contrary to the written law. In some instances this comes about in accordance with the will of the legislators, in others, against their will: against their will when it escapes their notice, *in accordance with their will when they are not able to make distinctions, and it is necessary to speak universally, yet things are not that way, but rather for the most part*' (ἔστιν δὲ ἐπιεικὲς τὸ παρὰ τὸν γεγραμμένον νόμον δίκαιον. συμβαίνει δὲ τοῦτο τὰ μὲν ἐκόντων τὰ δὲ ἀκόντων τῶν νομοθετῶν, ἀκόντων μὲν ὅταν λάθῃ, ἐκόντων δ' ὅταν μὴ δύνωνται διορίσαι, ἀλλ' ἀναγκαῖον μὲν ἢ καθόλου εἰπεῖν, μὴ ἢ δέ, ἀλλ' ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ (1374a27–31)).

³⁴ 'If there are cases in which the shortcomings of the law should be "corrected", are there second-order rules which enable one to identify these cases? And, supposing that one could determine some such rules, are there other second-order rules which enable one to treat the exceptional cases identified by the first kind in the appropriate way? ... it is clear that one must know *that* one is dealing with an exceptional case before one can think of asking *how* it is appropriate to deal with it. But it is equally clear that one can know *that* one has to deal with an exceptional case without knowing so much as *how* it is appropriate to deal with it. One must have what I will call "that-rules" as well as "how-rules"' (Brunschiwig 1996a, 116).

³⁵ *Rhetoric* I 15, where Aristotle surveys 'atechnical' proofs, supplies a manoeuvre for the forensic pleader working against a law which contrasts with equitable correction: if 'the things concerning which it was established no longer remain, but the law does, one ought to attempt to show this and to fight the law in this way' (εἰ τὰ μὲν πράγματα ἐφ' οἷς ἐτέθη ὁ νόμος μηκέτι μένει, ὁ δὲ νόμος, πειρατέον τοῦτο δηλοῦν καὶ μάχεσθαι ταύτη πρὸς τὸν νόμον, 1375b12–14). Aristotle does not say what kind of law might be in question, and whether it is permanently obsolete or only temporarily out of gear with the facts; but *prima facie* this would seem to be an opportunity for repeal rather than correction. But on the other hand, if the law is favourable to one's case, one must say that 'in other fields of expertise it does not pay to outsmart the doctor; for the doctor's error is not as injurious as becoming used to disobey the *archon*' (ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις τέχναις οὐ λυσιτελεῖ παρασφίξεσθαι τὸν ἱατρόν· οὐ γὰρ τοσοῦτο βλάπτει ἡ ἁμαρτία τοῦ ἱατροῦ

launching his counterfactual corrective procedure, the judge cannot be accused of acting arbitrarily so long as he invokes the very principles of justice which motivated the legislation, and which serve to justify both adherence to and departure from the law.³⁶

On Brunschwig's reading, in the appeal to the intention of the legislator 'we have ... the fundamental rule of equity according to Aristotle: the "how-rule" for equitable judgements, of course, since Aristotle presents it as such; but also, implicitly, the "that-rule", since the judge must consider also the intention of the legislator to be able to discern cases where it is "correct" to apply the law exactly' (Brunschwig 1996a, 151).³⁷ What manner of rule is this? Obviously, to speak of rule-following here is entirely unproblematic and legitimate: the judge grappling with a case where application of the law would be unfair is to run the counterfactual. But first, to look no further than the interminable wrangling over the proper interpretation of the intentions of the authors of the American constitution, the substance of the rule is decidedly problematic and possibly of dubious legitimacy. Thus we may feel less than sanguine about the prospects for Aristotle's rule yielding properly determinate and objectively defensible, never mind verifiable, answers: to a degree which might well matter, the inscrutability of intentions is persistent. Second and independently of these limitations integral to the counterfactual exercise, it is not as if following the rule 'consider what the legislator intended' can be cashed out by reaching for a manual containing heuristic rules for

ὅσον τὸ ἐθίξεσθαι ἀπειθεῖν τῷ ἄρχοντι (1375b20–22)). These rhetorical shifts are, of course, amoral: thus we can easily extrapolate from this latter instance that the other side tries to play the equity card, whether licitly or not.

³⁶ 'What is required here is an evaluation of the consequences of its application in particular cases, and not simply a recognition of its gaps. What is more, the criteria of that evaluation must also be at work when determining those cases where the law *does not fall short*, and where it should therefore be applied rigorously. The norms of legal justice and of *epieikeia* thus function, not independently (one intervening when the other quits), but both under control of a higher norm (what I earlier called a "that-rule"), which determines the cases where legal justice has sway, and those where it must yield to equity' (Brunschwig 1996a, 139–140).

'Equity comes into play (and it does so clearly under the guise of indulgence) when it is a matter of knowing *how* to resolve cases of suspension of a rule. But it is distinct from the higher-order rule which governs its coming into play; this higher-order rule can close the door to indulgence as well as open it' (Brunschwig 1996a, 140–141).

³⁷ *Rhetoric* I 13 enunciates a definition of equity which complements the fundamental rule of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: equity 'has regard for the lawgiver rather than the law, and for the lawgiver's thought rather than his expression' (καὶ τὸ μὴ πρὸς τὸν νόμον ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν νομοθέτην, καὶ μὴ πρὸς τὸν λόγον ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν διάνοιαν τοῦ νομοθέτου σκοπεῖν (1374b11–13)).

the revelation of intention. If we endorse Brunschwig's contention that the appeal displays an 'internal duality',³⁸ then the judge who imagines what the legislator would have said comes up with a rationale for contravening the strict verdict which does not stipulate any legal revision and need not carry over to another case—it all depends on how exceptional this particular exception is. On the other hand, the judge who imagines that the legislator apprised of this case would have enacted a supplementary provision does come up with a new and more specific legal rule; but it goes without saying that he has no rule-book to consult.

'For this is also the reason why not everything is in accordance with law: namely that it is impossible to establish a law about some things, so that a decree is required. For the rule of what is indeterminate is also indeterminate, as is also the lead rule of Lesbian building: for the rule adjusts to the shape of the stone and does not hold fast, as the decree adjusts to affairs.'³⁹ This memorable declaration is not pellucid: for how can a canon operate, if it flexibly complies with the contours of whatever it 'measures', rather than holding fast and revealing the extent of deviation from true?⁴⁰ Much of the unclarity of the comparison is, of

³⁸ 'I have already emphasised the negative fact that that principle [the appeal to the intention of the legislator] does not at all constitute an appeal to some universal law, since the "intention of the legislator" would not be any less particular ... when he authorises an exception than when he enacts a rule. In conclusion, I would like to draw attention to the internal duality of that appeal to "the legislator's intention". That the formulation Aristotle gives is twofold has not, it seems to me, been appreciated: the judge says (a) "what the legislator would have said if he had been there"; and (b) "what he would have put in his law, had he known of the case in question". Why this duality, and what is the relation between (a) and (b)? In case (a) the judge imagines himself in the shoes of the legislator, who *would say* what must be done in that case, that is, *what he would himself do as judge*; whereas in case (b) the judge simply puts himself in the shoes of a legislator who *would write* a supplement to his own law, taking its generality down a notch, but *keeping to his role as legislator*, and leaving it up to the judge to apply the law which he has revised himself' (Brunschwig 1996a, 151–152). Here one might profitably draw in Schauer on 'Interpretation and Discretion' (Schauer 1991, 222–228).

³⁹ τοῦτου γὰρ αἴτιον καὶ τοῦ μὴ πάντα κατὰ νόμον εἶναι, ὅτι περὶ ἐνίων ἀδύνατον θέσθαι νόμον, ὥστε ψηφίσματος δεῖ. τοῦ γὰρ ἀορίστου ἀόριστος καὶ ὁ κανὼν ἐστίν, ὥσπερ καὶ τῆς Λεσβίας οἰκοδομίας ὁ μολίβδινος κανὼν· πρὸς γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ λίθου μετακινεῖται καὶ οὐ μένει ὁ κανὼν, καὶ τὸ ψηφίσμα πρὸς τὰ πράγματα (EN V 10, 1137b27–32).

⁴⁰ The 'fame ... [of 'this famous comparison'] should not make one lose sight of the audacity and paradox in speaking of an "indeterminate rule". For either such a rule enables one to determine what one must do in a given case—and then how is it indeterminate? Or else it does not—and then how is it a rule at all?' (Brunschwig 1996a, 115).

course, simply the artefact of our ignorance of the nature of the Lesbian rule; but conservative conjecture will gain us some headway. I take it that the Lesbian rule comes into play when the builder's job is to top an uneven course of masonry with stones which will conform to the irregularities and thus produce a solid wall. So it is not at all as if just anything goes: but it is what is already here, rather than some notional ideal, which sets the standard. After all, what measures length around a curve must bend to fit that curve: but, unlike a rubber band, the leaden rule does not stretch. Therefore the standard is 'indeterminate' only in the non-paradoxical sense of not furnishing predetermined measurements, irrespective of what is already in place, and with which we must work; in the hands of the expert, it certainly does 'enable one to determine what one must do in a given case'.

But we should be alert to a quite different challenge: is it not grossly misleading to speak of a 'rule', when this canon always gives way? Should the term 'rule' not be reserved for a constant standard unaffected by rough particularities? Two answers, one from each *comparandum*. The objection is not superficially lexicographical; but it is confused, if premised on the supposition that rational objectivity entails constancy. One presumes that the Lesbian rule was an effective tool for matching up the stones, or else Aristotle would not have formulated his analogy: that no two courses are the same hardly means that there is nothing to choose between a solid wall and one full of chinks. And we must also run through the implications of what is, after all, the contrast that the comparison is meant to illuminate: that between law and decree, *nomos* and *psêphisma*. An Athenian decree is a particular judgement encapsulating a policy the constitutionally empowered assembly reaches by debating the pros and cons of the alternatives. Factors influencing the final judgement may range from dispassionate technical advice through rhetorical argument to ideological manipulation and the tapping of partisan loyalties; but, *pace* the *Statesman*, there are no *a priori* grounds for pessimistic confidence that all democratic decrees will be shot through with *parti pris* stupidity. Nevertheless it is likely enough that such a debate could range so widely and absorb such motley contributions that the decision-makers might be hard put to say just what it was which proved decisive in their passing this *psêphisma*, or indeed how they might best assess this kind of decree for adequacy once it has been made; but yet again they need not feel any pressure to surrender their title to rational political deliberation, as if any procedure not transparent to analysis is little better than coin-tossing.

We circle back continually to this moral, that the relative inaccessibility or uncodifiability and so forth of a procedure does not *ipso facto* expose it as random or otherwise irrational. The moral might appear to preclude rules from playing any part in such procedures; but that would be an over-hasty impression. There have indeed been scholars who think that it is only to be expected that the Aristotle whose *phronimos* sees the particular would also come up with the theory of equity;⁴¹ yet let alone the one doctrine's predisposing one to accept the other, even the weaker idea that there is some kind of natural affinity between them is fallacious. This is easily grasped when one considers that a dyed in the wool proponent of an ethical system resting on a foundation of principles whence particular decisions are derived by the imposition of rules might well espouse something not unlike the Aristotelian theory of equity. A universalist could be of the opinion that such is the disproportion between our feeble powers of ethical judgement and the massive intricacy of the human situation that, by default, the best way for us to go on is to cite our basic principles and apply our rules, but that often—or even as often as not, if the disparity is huge—we are left with the robust hunch that to obey the rules this time would be to do wrong; and then equity is called for. How this version of equity operates—whether it too invokes a 'fundamental rule', etc.—will decide whether its exponent has lit upon a rational alternative to simple rule-following (but one 'external', as it were, to the ethical system itself), or concedes that when deduction falters, adjustment is insusceptible to rational explanation. But either which way, commitment to a theory of equity as such is severed from particularist leanings in ethics.

⁴¹ E.g. the conflation of 'the only metric we can impose on the subject matter of practice is the metric of the Lesbian rule' (Wiggins 1980, 231, emphasis added); and 'the general point that emerges from this important passage [1137b11–24]—namely, that while (universal) rules may be indispensable to social order, they can be of use only by virtue of our ultimately *implicit* (rather than explicit) grasp of what would count as applying them correctly or intelligently in particular cases—sheds light on Aristotle's more famous doctrine that (general) truths of ethics hold only "for the most part" (1094b21). The passage should serve as a warning against any facile classification of ethical theories in terms of "universalism versus particularism" (Lovibond 2002, 30 n. 16). The point is neo-Aristotelian and Lovibond's, rather than Aristotle's and, if inspired by the text, is not anchored within it; nevertheless the final sentence is indeed a salutary warning. Horn 2006 falls prey to the counterpart confusion: he too presumes that the legal and the moral are so linked that one is a particularist in both or neither, but then argues fallaciously from an anti-particularist reading of *epieikeia* to a generalist reading of Aristotelian ethics.

So if we relinquish the aspiration to proceed directly from the theory of equity to the particularism of moral vision, what is it in Aristotle's outlook that induces him to propound an ethics which, at the very least, downplays the role allotted to generalisations?⁴² And is it something about social interaction which minimises the useful scope of generalisations, or is there rather a limitation on their validity throughout sublunary nature making itself felt in human societies as the restraint on rule-following?⁴³

'(i) Fine and just things, which political science investigates, contain much diversity and variation, so that they seem to be conventional rather than natural. (ii) But even goods contain such variation, on account of many people deriving injuries from them: for indeed some people have perished on account of money, others on account of bravery. (iii) Therefore it is acceptable for those discussing such matters on such a basis to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and for those discussing what happens for the most part on a basis holding for the most part also to reach such conclusions.'⁴⁴ Though much referred to, this, Aristotle's canonical statement of the inexactitude of ethical and political theorising,

⁴² This is not, of course, to deny that generalisations are the stuff of ethical theory; and Aristotle does believe that the study of true theoretical generalisations—*viz* those set forth in his own philosophy—can make the already good better. But these generalisations do not have this effect as a result of their direct application to the particulars: they help us to an improved understanding of the rights and wrongs of action, but at a contemplative remove from performance.

⁴³ Brunschwig would plump for the latter option, as one can see from his rigorous exposition of a deep analogy between Aristotelian equity and physics: '... the Aristotelian theory of equity has a structure parallel to that of the theory of the laws of inductive science. Physical laws, like the laws that make up legal codes, only capture *hōs epi to polu* regularities ... Induction allows one to state a law which covers the general case but admits of exceptions ... From this, one of two things follows: either exceptions are dismissed as accidents, or the accumulation of new experience permits one to cover them through a refinement of the law ... But this last formulation has the same inductive status as the one before it: it is only valid as a general rule ..., and it repels new sets of exceptions ...

In parallel, the *hōs epi to polu* generality of the legal code of a state necessarily leaves at its perimeters a margin which is the home of equity, and thus the impossibility of a universal rule of equity corresponds to the impossibility of a science of the accidental. But this margin can either turn out to be irreducible—and this is the case in which the spirit of the legislator is invoked only to invite it to act as a judge—or it may be reducible, at least partially, by a supplementary law—and this is the case in which the spirit of the legislator is invoked to refine his own work as legislator' (Brunschwig 1996a, 152–153).

⁴⁴ τὰ δὲ καλὰ καὶ τὰ δίκαια, περὶ ὧν ἡ πολιτικὴ σκοπεῖται, πολλὴν ἔχει διαφορὰν καὶ πλάνην, ὥστε δοκεῖν νόμῳ μόνον εἶναι, φύσει δὲ μὴ. τοιαύτην δὲ τένα πλάνην ἔχει καὶ τὰ γὰρ διὰ τὸ πολλοῖς συμβαίνειν βλάβας ἀπ' αὐτῶν· ἤδη γάρ τινες ἀπώλοντο

tends to be accorded the status of a truism, albeit one worth reiterating while impractical absolutists of one stamp or another continue to clutter the philosophical scene. But in fact the precise thrust of this celebrated denial that accuracy is to be had in the domain of ethics and politics is curiously difficult to make out, and we shall take a fine-toothed comb to the passage.

(i) What is the difference between ‘diversity’ and ‘variation’? What counts as fine and just diverges considerably as one ranges across states or societies: their formal institutions and informal mores are diverse. And the propriety of a kind of behaviour might be dramatically context-sensitive: particular tokens of an action type vary between virtue and vice. Such diversity and variation provide the traditional bread and butter of the relativist, whether vulgar or sophisticated: since manifestations of nature are always and everywhere the same, the striking fluctuations in what is regarded as *kalon* or *dikaion* suffice to demonstrate that they are merely conventional. Variation might seem to work more powerfully to this effect than diversity: since the contrasting tokens crop up within one and the same society—as Heraclitus says, ‘were it not to Dionysus that they made the procession and sung the hymn to the shameful parts, the deed would be most shameless’ (fr. 15)—anti-relativists cannot take refuge in the thought that surely there must be a privileged set of standards (their own, most likely) invulnerable to relativistic attack.

(ii) In response to this too rapid and slick inference to mere conventionality, Aristotle is quick to point out that it cannot withstand inspection: for if good things too are similarly variable, while nevertheless their variability would tempt no one to doubt that their goodness is objective and natural, then it would be wrong-headed to think otherwise in the case of the fine and the just.⁴⁵ I suppose that what lurks just beneath the surface of this counter-argument is the fact that the relativists in question are no benign cultural anthropologists, as it were, but rather cynical, deflationary would-be reductionists of morality to a device of sociopolitical control, *à la Callicles et Thrasymachus*. Thus what they have in their

διὰ πλοῦτον, ἔτεροι δὲ δι’ ἀνδρείαν. ἀγαπητόν οὖν περὶ τοιούτων καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων λέγοντας παχυλῶς καὶ τύπῳ τάληθες ἐνδείκνυσθαι, καὶ περὶ τῶν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ καὶ ἐκ τοιούτων λέγοντας τοιαῦτα καὶ συμπεραίνεισθαι (EN I 3, 1094b14–22).

⁴⁵ ‘Aristotle’s point is that we need not resort to this theory [that moral values are man-made rules] to explain why “the same” thing is right for one person and wrong for another, since the objective right or wrong of the action varies with circumstances. No one would argue that the value of health is “only a matter of convention” on the ground that illness sometimes confers advantages’ (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 265).

sights are primarily values which might well involve disregard for or even sacrifice of one's own interests for the sake of doing right by others. This interpretation makes good sense of the example of injurious riches, since the self-aggrandising enemy of morality will assume that wealth is a reliable, natural good for him.⁴⁶ One might complain that the interpretation cannot, however, handle the other example, bravery, since the extreme of bravery is heroism, and performance of a heroic deed might call for the ultimate sacrifice: how then would the relativist have ever allocated bravery to the category of the natural and invariably beneficial good, rather than the conventional and routinely harmful? The answer is twofold. First, one must get clear on the identity of those on whose behalf the heroic sacrifice is made: fellow citizen-soldiers or 'one's own kind', be that the extended family or social class? On the latter option, it is not obvious that the bravery example is an embarrassment to my reading. Second, the brave act may be *kalon* in the sense of inherently 'noble', viz a way that these relativists will want to be, without that collapsing immediately into the sense of *kalon* which couples it closely with *dikaion* that they disavow as an ideological swindle, viz 'fine things of which society as a whole approves'.

(iii) What follows from what? I feel that diversity, as opposed to variation, is probably otiose in the *Nicomachean Ethics*—at least until the final chapter's transition to the subject matter of the *Politics*. They were initially paired in (i) for two reasons. First and positively, this stretch of Aristotle's introductory discussion bears globally on both treatises: if political scientists should be able to evaluate the internal condition and external circumstances of a variety of polities, predict their careers and solve or at least ameliorate some of their problems, then they had better be aware that diversity of *mores*, institutional set-ups and local social expectations which have evolved historically undermines any ambition for a universal, one-size-fits-all political science. But if both Aristotle's political and his ethical theories have particularist tendencies, the implications of diversity loom large only for the former. Second and negatively,

⁴⁶ 'Ethics is full of generalisations, such as "lying is to be avoided", "wealth is advantageous", which are not undermined by acknowledged counter-examples ... The audience, therefore, should have had practical experience (since this is what enables one to decide, in a given case, whether an ethical generalisation applies to it, and to see why not, if not)' (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 265). This may be so, and is an interesting claim; but it is orthogonal to the argument against relativism which Aristotle is unfolding, and I doubt that he has it in mind.

Aristotle begins by linking diversity to variation because they are common grist to the relativists' mill; but once he has moved from diversity in the fine and just which they target to variation in the good which they fatally neglect, diversity drops out of sight and variation alone figures in the lesson which we right-thinking non-relativists are to take away from their refutation. Since the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a work of theory intended to improve practice, it is essential for both our enhanced understanding and performance of particular actions that we take full account of their maximal context-sensitivity. So what one must bring to this book are, as it were, the shared evaluative predilections of a large part of the better sort convened at one of the great panhellenic festivals; where the good Athenian might part company from his Megarian counterpart is for the reader of its successor to contemplate.

Observe that Aristotle's characterisation of what is meant to follow from variation is multiple; but that how the elements of the package might fit together is unclear. That the *Nicomachean Ethics* deals in generalisations flows immediately from the fact that it is a work of theory, and theory must ascend from the particular to the general, if it is to attain both the breadth of coverage and depth of formal understanding to which an Aristotelian science aspires: this is so, even if the science of human affairs is narrow and shallow relative to other sciences, and regardless of ethics' being a theory with a practical orientation.⁴⁷ Therefore we have two intersecting issues to consider: when an ethical generalisation is somehow inadequate to a particular *analysandum* or *faciendum*, does it fall short in the same way in the theoretical and the practical spheres? And however that might be, do Aristotle's three marks of the deficiency of ethical generalisation cohere neatly? Are they equally well-motivated as implications of variation?

Do 'roughly' and 'in outline' come to nearly the same thing? In common usage, yes; but they are not necessarily working as a *hendiadys* here.

⁴⁷ Winter 1997 makes out an unusually good case for the validity of *hôs epi to polu* syllogisms in general. However, I demur from his particular conclusion that 'the procedure I offer is part of a picture of an Aristotelian science of ethics that could involve *action guiding moral principles*. Ethical principles like "repaying debts is just" appear to express technical *hôs epi to polu* relations. Principles of this kind could serve as major premisses of practical syllogisms' (Winter 1997, 187, emphasis added). A singularly implausible and unhappy example of syllogistic action guidance, given that Aristotle expressly allows for situations wherein such a syllogism will conflict with competing moral inferences, so that no unique right answer could be *deduced* (EN IX 2, discussed below).

Consider 'the good man does not press intemperately for the repayment of what is owed him'. So far as I can see, this is an exceptionless generalisation, and therefore it is bang on the truth, not some rough approximation to it. In the theoretical sphere, that gives us an unqualified, specific and substantive truth;⁴⁸ and surely Aristotle would affirm that it is but one of many such propositions to which we should unhesitatingly sign up. However, any description of the good man is normative; and therefore the smooth truth of 'the good man does not press intemperately for the repayment of what is owed him' has the practical consequence that we ought to emulate his gracious forbearance. Thus the smooth theoretical truth is transformed into a rough practical outline:⁴⁹ who but the *phronimos* has the assurance to demarcate a tactful reminder from what borders on dunning? Yet again, this unhelpful roughness does not coincide with the 'for the most part' mark of ethical generalisation: the *phronimos* may, on occasion, demand repayment; but, on such an occasion, the demand will not be intemperate. We should resist any inclination to help ourselves to the nominative τύπος, on the strength of the descriptive dative τύπω. If 'the good man does not press intemperately ...', then there are boundaries which must not be violated; but it is not as if we have anything like a mould from which we cast identical forms to be filed down to suit the requirements of one or another situation. Theory and generalisation are coterminous, leaving off before wise vision sees what would be right or wrong.⁵⁰ 'But if the *phronimos* knows how best to act here and now, surely that knowledge must accommodate at least the potential for some generalisations?' No. Absent fake generalisations manufactured by a 'were pertinently similar circumstances to recur ...' operator, to make this supposition is to beg the question against moral vision.

⁴⁸ 'The *Ethics* contains many *formal* statements which are not rough generalisations: e.g. the proposition that moral virtue is a median disposition, the definition of happiness, the classification of parts of the soul, the conclusion that pleasure is not a process' (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 265; emphasis added). If 'formal' here is meant to limit the smoothly exceptionless to propositions leached of substantive content, then I disagree.

⁴⁹ 'The roughness is an immediate consequence of the practicality' (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 265).

⁵⁰ But 'a grasp of what justice *is* is nothing over and above the ability to recognise the justice or otherwise of individual actions, practices, etc.' (Woods 1986, 159, emphasis added) goes too far by stripping theory quite bare: later tempered by 'one's grasp of what the best life for a human being is consists in, or very largely consists in, one's ability to discern what is required of the virtuous person in particular cases' (*ibid.* 164).

Finally, what is the specific contribution of ‘for the most part’?⁵¹ A *hôs epi to polu* generalisation need be intrinsically neither rough nor sketchy; this mark simply instructs us to be alive to exceptions to the ethical rule: obviously, I am disregarding inaccurate application, *viz* using the rule as if it were exceptionless, or falling back on it as a rough guide we feel we cannot do without. Let us now take account of what might seem to be an asymmetry between virtue and vice with weighty practical consequences. On the Aristotelian scheme of moral education, we learn to be good by performing good acts. But just as the perception of the *phronimos* is not rule-driven, so too the best moral educator will not stick rigidly to some paedagogical code (indeed, only a *phronimos* could serve as an impeccable teacher). For if I am learning to be moderate, say, then I must be encouraged to perform an action *a* which is not only in fact moderate, but also such that its moderation is salient to the likes of me:⁵² otherwise the performance will do nothing to help me along. But the salience of morally significant features is every bit as context-sensitive, *etc.*, as any of the other uncodifiably variable properties of actions. So both being good and teaching goodness take us beyond ethical generalisations, which always carry *ceteris paribus* riders.⁵³ At first

⁵¹ Not a mere statistical frequency: ‘in all three examples (about justice, wealth and bravery), the usual generalisations that Aristotle alludes to are most plausibly taken to describe the normal situation rather than the most frequent situation’ (Irwin 2000, 110). It follows that the superlative ‘most’ is not what we want; but it should be kept, since we don’t want the original *polu* either. Anagnostopoulos’ suggestion that ‘for the most part Bs are A’ is to be taken as ‘almost all B’s are A’ rather than the simple ‘Most B’s are A’ (Anagnostopoulos 1994, 277) is not tenable (see Winter’s critique, especially Winter 1997, 175).

⁵² My employment of ‘salience’ contrasts with that of Wiggins and McDowell: for the latter it refers to what monopolises fully adult moral vision (e.g. ‘it is by virtue of his seeing this particular fact rather than that one as the salient fact about the situation that he is moved to act by this concern rather than that one’ (McDowell 1998, 68)), but the uses are complementary.

⁵³ ‘... if the student is to have “the *that*” for which the doctrines in Aristotle’s lectures provide the explanatory “*because*”, if he is to be starting out on a path which will lead to his acquiring that educated perception, the emphasis had better be on his knowing of specific actions that they are noble or just in specific circumstances. I put it as a matter of emphasis only, of degree, because often, no doubt, moral advice will come to him in fairly general terms; a spot of dialectic may be needed to bring home to the young man the limitations and imprecision of what he has learned. But even where the advice is general, this need not mean he is taught that there are certain rules of justice, say, which are to be followed as a matter of principle, without regard for the spirit of justice and the ways in which circumstances alter cases. What Aristotle is pointing to is our ability to internalise from a scattered range of particular cases a general evaluative attitude which is not reducible to rules or precepts’ (Burnyeat 1980, 72).

glance one might form the impression that the same holds true of vice: think of what is needed for unerring perception that some comment is to be repressed or behaviour avoided as tactless. The asymmetry has not yet come out: 'avoid tactlessness', no less than 'seek moderation', is an unqualified, and generally unhelpful, imperative. But what about the prohibition of matricide? 'Avoid tactlessness' is defeasible, since the *phronimos* may find himself so circumstanced that doing the tactless thing is the lesser of two evils; but no one ever could, let alone should, kill their mother. Aristotle readily recognises that there are such absolute, negative principles. And we put them to real practical work without any call for the eyes of the *phronimos*: to see that that the woman who has murdered my father is my mother and thus to abstain from killing her in vengeance is garden variety perception, not moral vision.⁵⁴ And so, perhaps, not going afoul of these paramount principles is enough for not being wicked, and to school us in the avoidance of villainy is to convince us that and why there must never be an infraction of such overriding prohibitions.⁵⁵

However, the proposition that this asymmetry between virtue and vice has *weighty* practical consequences is largely spurious. The Aristotelian reason for this is simple enough—although the situation might not seem quite so straightforward to those not wedded to the Aristotelian viewpoint. The stated goal of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to augment our capacity for prudent deliberation. But, as Aristotle cautions us in a renowned passage, we do not all share the aptitude for ethical improvement: the course is unsuitable for the morally immature, and impotent to sway those whose intellectual and affective corruption has left them impermeable to doctrinal influence (*EN* I 3, 1095a6–11). To get better, we must start off fairly good. Anyone who so much as ponders the question, 'should I execute the mother who murdered my father?', regardless of whether they end up concluding that that would be beyond the pale,

⁵⁴ 'Just as it is clear, indeed mechanically ascertainable, whether or not a certain move would be castling across check, so too any plausibly absolutist ethic will not prohibit something absolutely unless it is a perspicuous matter whether taking a certain course of action would mean doing that thing' (Denyer 1981/82, 65).

⁵⁵ 'The casuist raises such a question ["What is it right to do in such-and-such circumstances?"] only to ask "Would it be *permissible* to do so-and-so?" or "Would it be permissible *not* to do so-and-so?" Only if it would *not* be permissible *not* to do so-and-so could he say "*This* would be *the* thing to do"' (Anscombe 1981a, 36). She glosses the final alternative: 'necessarily a rare case: for the positive precepts, e.g. "Honour your parents", hardly ever prescribe, and seldom even necessitate, any particular action' (Anscombe 1981a, 36 n. 5).

stands condemned as a person of bizarrely unsound character, if not necessarily a dyed in the wool reprobate.⁵⁶ Therefore if Aristotle is guilty of expressing himself loosely when he declares that the generalisations of ethics obtain only *hôs epi to polu*, the fault is venial: as far as never even looking beyond the pale is concerned, we decent folk are firmly in the company of the *phronimos*. We were never in peril of descending into villainy. Some of us wish to become less tactless, others, more delicate in our generous impulses; and for this no exceptionless and useful rules are available.⁵⁷

And why is this reason simple but not straightforward? For Aristotle, plentiful exceptions are the rule under the moon: but how exceptional are these exceptions? Departures from the mean might be very numerous, but of small magnitude; or rare, but huge; or both frequent and sizable; and to form a view of how significant divergence might be before having a

⁵⁶ Cf. ‘... if someone really thinks, *in advance*, that it is open to question whether such an action as procuring the judicial execution of the innocent should be quite excluded from consideration—I do not want to argue with him; he shows a corrupt mind’ (Anscombe 1981a, 40). And: ‘most of the options that an agent *might* otherwise consider are evidently unacceptable, whether universally or in context: they just don’t enter his deliberations—unless to be rejected at once’ (Price 2005, 203).

⁵⁷ Hence Taylor’s amusing analysis goes interestingly wrong: ‘it is tempting, then, to attribute to Aristotle the view that practical generalisations which are specific enough to contain substantive prescriptions as to what one should do hold only for the most part.

But it is clear that that view is itself one which Aristotle could have believed to hold only for the most part. He holds that some kinds of act ... should never be done, and some kinds of motives ... should never be felt or acted on. So “Never under any circumstances commit matricide” and “Never oppose the promotion of a deserving candidate out of spite” are substantive, but exceptionless generalisations. Such cases are indeed the minority, but Aristotle is committed to admitting them. So his claim about the lack of “fixity” in practical matters is itself to be treated as a generalisation with exceptions’ (Taylor 2006, 69). First, ‘... as to what one should do ...’ should be emended to ‘... as to what one should *not* do ...’. Second, his first example is not on all fours with his second. Only the first exemplifies an exceptionless prohibitive principle conformity with which does not require moral insight. Spite, on the other hand, often conceals itself from not only its victims, but also the spiteful person, who manages to remain unaware of the nature of the emotion which actuates him. True, the *phronimos* never experiences an unwholesome *pathos* such as spite; nevertheless, both middling and good but imperfect people will have to look inside themselves to be sure of what is really impelling them to act. Therefore gauging one’s motivation will enjoin introspection; and successful introspection cannot go by the book, since those tempted to deceive themselves will quickly circumvent any set of rules for self-inspection. Aristotle brands *phthonos* as an essentially vicious *pathos* (EN II 6); but it is Taylor who has to invent the maxim, while Aristotle himself expresses the total ban on matricide (EN III 1, 1110a26–29). It follows that ‘Never oppose the promotion of a deserving candidate out of spite’ may be substantive and exceptionless, but yet fail ‘to contain substantive prescriptions as to what one should do’.

look at how things are in the world would be indefensibly dogmatic. I hesitate to say whether here we light upon Aristotle the rigorous empiricist, or the Aristotle who can be alarmingly nonchalant in his casual assumption that things are as they appear; as it happens, it appeared to him that mundane irregularity is a regular occurrence, but that the wildly accidental is exceptional (except, one might hypothesise, during recurrent periods of cataclysm). On what do I base this claim? There is no discussion in Aristotle's ethical works of how we might best carry on when we feel all at sea because our circumstances are extraordinary and unprecedented, such that we are in *aporia* about whether and how our ordinary norms apply. Not but that he takes the existence of grave obstacles to virtue for granted: it is awfully difficult to be good. Yet he does not consider the possibility that, *in extremis*, some of our normal assumptions might have to give way. Of course I am not for a moment suggesting, either on Aristotle's behalf or in my own right, that *in extremis* e.g. matricide might be a live option; my point is rather that were the fortuitous in Aristotle's world large-scale in its disruption of our expectations, we should expect him to address the issue of the moral quandaries in which we land as a consequence of haphazard and serious accidental conjunctions—which he doesn't.

At this juncture brief inspection of some Stoic material will be instructive. Since the cosmic *logos* is all-pervasive in its deterministic rationality, whatever happens happens for a reason which contributes to the divine plan. There are no exceptions to this prudential causality, but no human being, Sage or fool, is privy to anything like that plan in its entirety. From behind our veil of ignorance, it is epistemically possible that the *logos* holds many surprises in store for us: which is to say that we cannot be antecedently confident that events will unroll with any given degree of predictability. The good Stoic awaits the will of Zeus; and while divine intentions will never be capricious, we must not assume that we can track them with any firm assurance. Thus the viability of rule-following for living the Stoic life is an open question, to be resolved by research into the fragment of cosmic history to which we have access.

Tad Brennan's Stoics are rampant particularists. On his interpretation they took a leaf from Plato's Socratic book in their rejection of rule-following,⁵⁸ and were so convinced that the *logos* works unpredictably as

⁵⁸ 'This outcome may surprise us the less if we keep in mind the experience of Socrates, whose depiction in the Platonic dialogues had such an important influence on the Stoics. His ethical enquiries led him to believe that virtuous action cannot be produced merely

to retain only an etiolated, Pickwickian concept of ‘law’: ‘sometimes Zeus wills that we should be healthy, and sometimes Zeus wills that we should be ill. Our understanding of the Stoic equation of virtuous behaviour, the will of Zeus, and the “Law that is Common” should not start from the assumption that by “law” the Stoics must have meant invariable general regularities, and then conclude that Zeus in his normative role is similarly invariable. Rather, we should start from the evident variability of Zeus’s will, and assume that the “law” the Sage follows will be just that variable, and just that incapable of antecedent specification—that it is really not much like a law at all’ (Brennan 2005, 192–193). He surmises, on shaky evidence, that the Stoics were stimulated by their particularist reading of the *Statesman*: ‘in line with this dialogue, the Stoics opted to retain the view that the law is always correct, and rejected the view that the law is a system of general principles. Thus in Stoic parlance, “law” does not refer to a system of general principles, but to the particular injunctions of ethical experts’ (Brennan 2005, 193).⁵⁹ But *pace* Brennan, the Stoic definition of virtue as a skill concerning the whole of life,⁶⁰ taken in conjunction with their position that the virtues are related sciences and skills,⁶¹ dishes his exegesis: the Stoics did not dispute the common Hellenistic presumption that rules are at the core of an *epistêmê*, whatever the science might be. This is neither to say that a single and homogeneous notion of ‘rule’ was also common Hellenistic currency, nor that the Stoics conceived of (all) rules as ‘invariable general regularities’. Much to the point, Inwood has urged that ‘... the recommendations about moral choices based on Stoic axiology work as non-universal generalisations’,⁶² certainly defeasible, but nevertheless irreplaceable as ‘generally stable guidelines for *ordinary* decision-makers.’⁶³ The evidence which he has marshalled gives us good reason not to agree that on the Stoics’ revisionary understanding, ‘the law is always correct’: imperfect rules provide fools with essential

by acting in accordance with general rules phrased in observational terms. The only rules that we might bring with us into a new situation will either be exceptionless but too vague, as for instance “be courageous”, and “don’t commit injustice”, or adequately determinate but no more productive of virtue than the opposite, as for instance “never retreat in battle” or “always return deposits” (Brennan 2005, 194).

⁵⁹ I presume that despite what his phrasing suggests, ‘the view that the law is always correct’ does not fall within the scope of ‘in line with this dialogue’.

⁶⁰ ... ἀρετήν, περὶ ὅλον οὔσαν τὸν βίον τέχνην (Stobaeus 2.67).

⁶¹ πᾶσας δὲ τὰς ἀρετὰς ὅσα ἐπιστήμαί εἰσι καὶ τέχναι κοινὰ τε θεωρήματα ἔχειν (Stobaeus 2.63).

⁶² Inwood (1999), 105.

⁶³ Inwood (1999), 108.

help. On such a reading Stoic moral philosophy might still be considered particularist,⁶⁴ albeit not the unrestrained particularism endorsed by Brennan.

Brennan is on much firmer ground when he retails a shocking Stoic thought-experiment: ‘... Origen tells us that the Stoics said that incest is indifferent, despite the fact that one ought not to do such things in established political systems. “And as a hypothetical case, to show the indifference of it, they make the Sage and his daughter the sole survivors after the human race has been destroyed. And they ask whether it would be befitting for the father to have sex with the daughter so as to avoid the extinction of the whole human race” (*Contra Celsum* 4.45 = *SVF* 3.743). We may infer that the answer was “yes” from Origen’s loud displeasure ... what makes it befitting in this case—the fact that the survival of the race depends on it—has nothing to do with the man’s being a Sage, and the same rationale would make it obligatory for a pair of non-Sages in the same fix to do the same thing ... Asking “would the Sage have sex with his daughter?” guarantees that a “yes” answer will track the real issue of befittingness’ (Brennan 2005, 229 n. 16). This is where the contrast with Aristotle is telling. One might well have thought the sublunary world of Aristotelian contingencies would be hospitable to quite astonishing developments, while events in the deterministic Stoic cosmos would appear less and less surprising the more closely one approached Sagehood (to repeat, there is a remainder of mystery even for the Sage). The thought is valid for the Stoics, but not for Aristotle. Across the board he is a conservative philosopher, in more than one sense of ‘conservative’: hence his ignoring the possibility of noteworthy accidental conjunctions. Yet if the Sage is very seldom taken aback, we foolish learners positively require some shock treatment. Why do the Stoics go in for outlandish hypotheticals? They are only to be expected of any moralists who are assiduous in their effort to effect a root-and-branch transformation of our ethical presuppositions. For since it is a *donnée* of

⁶⁴ Inwood himself actually assimilates Aristotle and the Stoics on the score of a shared perception of the ‘need for situational sensitivity’ while giving them points for improving on his ‘vague’ ‘theory of rules’ (Inwood 1999, 104, emphasis added). I find myself unpersuaded that Aristotle was attempting a task at which the Stoics did better. Their *praecepta* are to assist fools who lack the intellectual-moral certitude of the Sage; the role of rules in Aristotelian education diminishes as one approaches ordinary moral maturity, not the sublime condition of the *phronimos*. On my interpretation, we should not expect a ‘theory of rules’ from Aristotle; there is no such thing, even a vague thing, to be found.

such an approach that the mass of people lie in the grip of complacent ignorance, at the very best purblind to truths which are nevertheless visible to the uncorrupted and educated eye, what is needed is stark illumination—and this is most easily shed on hypothetical situations wherefrom the distracting influence of the familiar and commonplace, which has inured us to error, is altogether absent. One might compare, say, Derek Parfit's penchant for puzzle cases and thought-experiments in his work on personal identity designed to convince us that we are mistaken about what really matters in a person, and to other people. And again it stands to reason that Aristotle never goes in for that kind of thing.

‘That one should act in accordance with right reason is a shared conviction: let it be assumed.’⁶⁵ Readers eager for clearer-cut definition of *orthos logos* will be disappointed: if it ‘prescribes the mean,’⁶⁶ Aristotle admits that this general truth doesn't get us much further, and that a better-articulated specification would be desirable (*EN* VI 1, 1138b25–34). This, however, is not forthcoming: if right reason ‘requires know-

⁶⁵ τὸ μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον πράττειν κοινὸν καὶ ὑποκείσθω (*EN* II 2, 1103b31–32). Rowe translates ‘now, that one should act in accordance with the correct prescription is a shared view—let it stand as a basic assumption’ and Broadie glosses: “‘correct prescription’ renders *orthos logos*, sometimes translated as “right rule”, sometimes as “right reason”. “Rule” is inappropriate, since the *orthos logos* operates in particular situations, and Aristotle does not think that knowing just what to do in a particular situation is given to us by rules. “Right reason” is misleading if it invites the interpretation “right reasoning”, since *logos* here means, as often, a *product* of reasoning such as a formula or articulate declaration’ (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 297). Fair enough, so far as concerns ‘right rule’—and very much a mis-rendering for us to shun, given our topic. But I retain ‘right reason’, despite the alleged potential for misunderstanding, because ‘correct prescription’ could itself lead the unwary astray. An Aristotelian agent can act rationally and deliberately without consciously rehearsing the action's rationale, and Broadie and Rowe do not suppose otherwise; however, that means that ‘articulate declaration’ should be softened to ‘articulable’, for which ‘prescription’ will not do. Cf. ‘the *orthos logos* of Aristotle's *phronimos*, that is, the reasoning by which one hits the mean (*to meson*) in action and feeling, is not constrained by an implicit method which theory lays bare. It is thus misrendered by W.D. Ross as “right principle or rule”, if implied by this is either a general rule we apply or a procedure we bring to bear for constructing principles. Rather, the *orthos logos* remains always much closer to the particulars: a way of “improvising” and “conjecturing” (*stokhazomai*) given experience and what is now at hand’ (Sherman 1989, 25). According to Broadie and Rowe, Sherman is wrong to take ‘right reason’ to be equivalent to ‘right reasoning’: but see Taylor's balanced discussion (Taylor 2006, 65–66). While it is true that theory cannot divulge the particulars which the *phronimos* sees, I am not certain that it follows therefrom that his hitting the mean need be wholly unmethodical. The language of methodical ‘constraint’ at one pole, of conjectural ‘improvisation’ at the other, is jarring: method might liberate, and a good Aristotelian action is not necessarily unpremeditated.

⁶⁶ τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὀρθὸς λέγει (*EN* VI 1, 1138b19–20).

ing how to exemplify virtue here and now,⁶⁷ we can do no other than to look to the example set by the virtuous paragon;⁶⁸ and what we get from that source remains resistant to generalisation, and so to the articulation which Aristotle has confessed we rightly hanker after.⁶⁹ A decision on how (un)satisfactory it is that we can neither eliminate the *phronimos* from our moral equations nor fill in place-holder counterfactual references to his wisdom ('... just how the *phronimos* would react in these circumstances ...') must wait on the penultimate phase of this study, devoted to the moral vision which constitutes that wisdom in action.

Aristotle conjoins his postulate that action should accord with right reason with a reprise of his affirmation that we must rest content with modest results: 'the entire account of actions ought to be expressed in outline and imprecisely: as we also said at the beginning, accounts should be demanded which match their subject-matter; and what concerns

⁶⁷ Sherman 1989, 51.

⁶⁸ περὶ δὲ φρονήσεως οὕτως ἂν λάβομεν, θεωρήσαντες τίνες λέγομεν τοὺς φρονίμους (EN VI 5, 1140a24–25). But if I am not myself a *phronimos*, how can I be sure that I have spotted one? Aristotle does not say: another example of his epistemological-cum-moral optimism/complacency? There is, or is said to be, a general problem about inexpert deference to expert authorities: how does one know who they are without being one, and hence not needing one? *Politics* III 11, 1282a3–7 suggests that *paideia* can help us to assess claims to *technê* when we ourselves lack the skill in question (cf. PA 639a1–6): but it may not be at all easy to apply this story to *phronêsis*. Aristotle ... believes that the purpose of studying politics—and by implication, ethics—is “not knowledge but action” (especially action in the public domain). It is therefore appropriate for him to place at the centre of these disciplines the *visibly attainable* ideal of a mind so ordered that it can give correct (or, anyway, maximally acceptable) answers to questions arising in moral and political practice. The ideal in question can be described as “visibly” attainable because when Aristotle reminds us of the authority we attribute to those who possess practical wisdom (who appreciate the “ultimate and particular” features of situations, “have the eye of experience”, “see aright”, and so forth), he does not envisage or leave room for the protest that we do not know who these people are: *that* there are such people is supposed to be a feature of everyone’s social experience, and if so, then it must be possible to point to some of them’ (Lovibond 2002, 53). ‘Everyone’ is stretching it: for Aristotle, far from everyone in his stratified society is of good enough character, mind and education to know a *phronimos* at sight; and if he did not envisage any such protest, that cannot suffice to inoculate us against the doubt that room for the protest is there, visible or not to Aristotle himself. And even in the best scenario, where the *phronimoi* have been securely identified, they will not serve as faultless paragons. A necessary condition for the incorrigibility of *epistêmê* is that its objects are immutable (EN VI 3, 1139b19–22): but practical wisdom at its best, dealing as it does with the contingently variable, cannot hope to attain to that perfection (‘the only models we have are the wise among us, and their wisdom is shot through with the metaphysical imperfection of what is and is not and comes to be only through chancy development’ (Broadie 1991, 257)).

⁶⁹ Peterson 1988 assembles a felicitous case for our being satisfied with little.

actions and the beneficial has nothing fixed, just as in matters of health. Given that such is the condition of a universal account, an account concerning particulars is even less precise: for they do not fall under any expertise or rule, and it is necessary for the agents themselves to be constantly on the watch for what is opportune, just as this is necessary in medicine and navigation.⁷⁰ On the assumption that Aristotle's failure to repeat the *hōs epì to polu* clause is casual, there is nothing new in his hedging about of the *katholou logos*; what is novel is the *a fortiori* argument about the *logos peri tôn kath' hekasta*. But the argument is dreadfully obscure. What is the import of 'they do not fall under any expertise or rule'?⁷¹ This must be a compression of 'they do not fall in their full particularity under any expertise or rule'. The steersman has received general instruction and practical training in how to safeguard his vessel and its crew and passengers; he has technical knowledge of what to do in such-and-such a kind of storm, of whatever force. Of course nothing guarantees that the master is currently coping with a tempest identical to one of which he had experience during his apprenticeship: indeed, the randomness of the weather virtually guarantees that the storms will not be twins. This will not matter, unless the storm is so prodigious as to defeat his skill; and here the fault would lie with the violence of the deviation from the norm, not the sheer changeability of the weather. And when he's sailing in a nasty sou'-wester of a kind with which he is familiar, he still has to keep his weather-eye open for sudden shifts in the wind, and trim his tackle smartly. But the weather-eye of the expert navigator is simply the analogue of the moral vision of the *phronimos*; and that one does not arrive at a perception of what needs doing by following a rule is no longer news. The best that could be said for this argument is that it misexpresses an otherwise familiar point; Aristotle is fumbling.⁷²

⁷⁰ πᾶς ὁ περὶ τῶν πρακτῶν λόγος τύπῳ καὶ οὐκ ἀκριβῶς ὀφείλει λέγεσθαι, ὥστε καὶ κατ' ἀρχὰς εἶπομεν ὅτι κατὰ τὴν ὕλην οἱ λόγοι ἀπαιτητέοι· τὰ δ' ἐν ταῖς πράξεσι καὶ τὰ συμφέροντα οὐδὲν ἐστιγῶς ἔχει, ὥστε οὐδὲ τὰ ὑγιεινά. τοιούτου δ' ὄντος τοῦ καθόλου λόγου, ἔτι μᾶλλον ὁ περὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα λόγος οὐκ ἔχει τὰκριβές· οὔτε γὰρ ὑπὸ τέχνην οὐθ' ὑπὸ παραγγελίαν οὐδεμίαν πίπτει, δεῖ δ' αὐτοὺς αἰετὸς πράττοντας τὰ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν σκοπεῖν, ὥστε καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἱατρικῆς ἔχει καὶ τῆς κυβερνητικῆς (EN II 2, 1104a1–10).

⁷¹ The translators divide over whether λόγος or (τὰ) καθ' ἕκαστα is the subject of πίπτει, but I can't see that the choice makes any difference.

⁷² Taylor thinks that even that estimation is too charitable: 'since the claim that generalisations lack precision appears to mean either that they lack the detail which makes them applicable to particular cases, or that they do not hold of all particular cases

Time for some provisional stocktaking, and for stepping back to gain a broader perspective. I have been speaking glibly of Aristotle as a particularist—to no ill effect, since the characterisation springs naturally enough from his disclaimers concerning what we might reasonably expect from moral generalisations.⁷³ But we would do well to take heed of Lovibond's advice to eschew 'any facile classification of ethical theories in terms of "universalism versus particularism"'. The lineaments of his version come out in sharper relief if we segregate it from far more radical particularisms; for the sake of this exercise, let us scan the clear blue water separating Aristotle from Jonathan Dancy.

In the nature of the case, any particularist who is also something of an objectivist in ethics will conceive of our apprehending moral truths in terms reminiscent of Aristotelian moral vision, whether or not this apprehension is cashed out in perceptual or quasi-perceptual terms; and Dancy is no exception.⁷⁴ What is distinctive of Dancy's philosophy is that his particularism is the offspring of the holism he advocates in the theory

without exception it is hard to see how judgements about those very cases could lack precision in either sense ... Aristotle's explanation, that such cases do not fall under any skill or instruction manual, but those who act must always have regard to the particular circumstances, is hardly perspicuous. The point appears to be that it is not possible to specify exhaustively the circumstances in which exceptions to a generalisation about conduct are warranted; so there can be no manual which reads "Always stand firm in the face of the enemy, except in circumstances x, y or z". (At best the manual could read "Always stand fast, except in circumstances x, y, z. etc., etc.") But that is merely to repeat the point that generalisations about conduct lack precision; it is not clear how that lack of precision is supposed to be transferred to the particular judgement that in this case, having regard to the particular circumstances, the courageous thing to do is to retreat' (Taylor 2006, 69–70). In Aristotle's defence one might argue that this *logos peritôn kath' hekasta* could say no more than that, but what courage here and now requires is e.g. an *orderly* retreat. *That* can be gestured at—as it were Alcibiades' praising Socrates 'swaggering and looking from side to side' at Delium (*Symposium* 221b)—and it can also be eloquently portrayed in great particularity—as Plato portrays the *phronimos* Socrates. But no prescriptive *logos* can catch this. Taylor's criticism is valid for those times when any retreat which is not a rout will do; but that is not all the time.

⁷³ At first blush Aristotle's delineation of greatness of soul—the slow gait, the deep tone of voice and measured delivery (*EN* IV 3, 1125a12–16)—might seem far too close to the *rules* of etiquette for comfort. But one cannot follow a prescription for achieving the stately walk of the *megalopsuchos*; one might compare the contrast between truly graceful trend-setters and *wannabes* who are slaves to what they believe to be the dictates of fashion—and can never achieve the cutting edge.

⁷⁴ 'Particularists conceive of the knowledge brought to a new case as much more like knowledge-how than like knowledge-that. That is, it is a *skill of discernment*, not knowledge of a set of true general propositions discovered by thinking about previous cases and applied somehow to new ones' (Dancy 2004, 142–143, emphasis added).

of reasons.⁷⁵ The repercussions of such holism are startling: ‘... the particularist sees no need to think that every feature has a constant weight ... For the particularist, it is going to be variability all the way down’ (Dancy 2004, 10); and ‘holism maintains that anything whatever might make a practical difference, or provide a reason, if the circumstances were suitable’ (Dancy 2004, 111). To the best of my knowledge, only once might one think to detect something of the tenor of this particularism in Aristotle (minus the motivating holism, of course): I refer to *Nicomachean Ethics* IX 2, an inconclusive, aporetic mulling over of obligations in outright conflict—or, more cautiously, of claims on the agent which are severally legitimate and serious, but jointly incompatible (1164b27). ‘It is certainly not easy to decide all such cases accurately; for they have many, diverse distinctions in respect of importance and unimportance, as well as nobility or necessity.’⁷⁶ So far this sounds like more of the same; and later Aristotle reiterates his standard let-out clause.⁷⁷ At first Aristotle comes out in favour of obligation’s trumping benefit to one’s friends or other supererogatory acts: but even this is only a *hôs epi to polu* generalisation (1164b31–34). The eye-opener is his then asserting that although in general debts should be repaid, one ought to incline towards giving rather than repayment when to give would be overridingly either noble or necessary.⁷⁸ What is conspicuous here is the ‘overridingly noble’ disjunct. Perhaps spending all one’s available funds on a present for one’s father illustrates ‘overridingly necessary’; in which case both the gift and the repayment are obligations, but so heterogeneous that the nicest judgement is called for. However, if the *kalon* can exceptionally take precedence over repayment, this would seem to be a case of supererogation trumping obligation: perhaps one performs some wonderful act of charity which leaves one out of pocket, in the knowledge that there is a creditor waiting in the wings.⁷⁹ I think that Dancy captures the spirit of *EN*

⁷⁵ ‘... a feature that is a reason in one case may be no reason at all, or an opposite reason, in another’ (Dancy 2004, 7). Crisp 2007, 44–45 trenchantly criticises Dancy’s exposition of theoretical holism and its exportation to the sphere of practical reasons.

⁷⁶ ἄρ’ οὖν πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀκριβῶς μὲν διορίσαι οὐ ῥᾷδιον; πολλὰς γὰρ καὶ παντοίας ἔχει διαφορὰς καὶ μεγέθει καὶ μικρότητι καὶ τῷ καλῷ καὶ ἀναγκαίῳ (*EN* IX 2, 1164b27–30).

⁷⁷ ὅπερ οὖν πολλάκις εἴρηται, οἱ περὶ τὰ πάθη καὶ τὰς πράξεις λόγοι ὁμοίως ἔχουσι τὸ ὠρισμένον τοῖς περὶ ἃ εἰσιν (1165a12–14).

⁷⁸ ὅπερ οὖν εἴρηται, καθόλου μὲν τὸ ὀφείλημα ἀποδοτέον, ἐὰν δ’ ὑπερτείνῃ ἡ δόσις τῷ καλῷ ἢ τῷ ἀναγκαίῳ, πρὸς ταῦτ’ ἀποκλιτέον (1165a2–4).

⁷⁹ Therefore I believe that Irwin is mistaken when he assures us that ‘consideration of Aristotle’s examples (friendship and equity) does not suggest that exceptions to general

IX 2 in these words: ‘... a particularist will say that sometimes one consideration matters more than another, and sometimes the other matters more than the one, without there needing to be any way of writing the rules for which way it goes when’ (Dancy 2004, 27).

So where is the clear blue water? If Aristotle supposes that ascertaining the just thing to do in such-and-such a situation cannot be computed from some general principle, he nonetheless takes it for granted that whatever the good mean actions are, they are constantly virtuous, whatever the bad extremes are, they are constantly vicious: his values are fixed, if indefinite as to which actions they mandate before moral vision hits on the actual particulars. Aristotle would never countenance the idea that we might find ourselves in a situation where that *this* would be the just course of action, so far from telling in favour of so behaving, in fact tells against. ‘The moderate form of holism allows the possibility of what we might call “default value”. By this I mean that it can accept a distinction between those features that bring no value to the situation, though once there they acquire a value that they can contribute to the whole, and those features that bring a value with them,⁸⁰ though once they are there *that initial value can be wiped out, or even reversed*, by other features of the situation’ (Dancy 2004, 185, emphasis added). This is moderation in the eye of an extremist. Dancy grants that he must produce a holistic account of ‘moral commitment’: ‘such an account would contain two

rules are irreducibly particular. We might argue, for instance, that a general rule about the priority of obligation to one’s parents over the obligation of reciprocity explains exceptions to the rule of reciprocity’ (Irwin 2000, 121): Irwin might so argue, but Aristotle does not. Crisp similarly mis-reads IX 2 (Crisp 2000a, 27), and the summation ‘Aristotelian uncodifiability will be accepted by most moral theorists, *since it allows for the usefulness of practical generalisations while insisting on the importance of ethical judgement*’ (Crisp 2000a, 32, emphasis added) should not command assent. Wiggins hits the nail on the head: ‘why is an axiom system any better foundation for practice than e.g. a long and incomplete or open-ended list of (always at the limit conflicting) *desiderata*? The claims of all true *beliefs* (about how the world is) are reconcilable. Everything true must be consistent with everything else that is true. But not all the claims of all rational concerns or even all moral concerns (that the world *be* thus or so) need be reconcilable’ (Wiggins 1980, 239 n. 8). Also see Lance and Little’s congenial discussion of what they call ‘defeasible generalisations’ (Lance and Little 2008, 61–68).

⁸⁰ Why should there be any ‘default values’? Since the radical particularist cannot appeal to principles or any other constant generalisations, they would seem to be inexplicable. Presumably particularists take this in their stride: that there are defaults is metaphysical bedrock, as it were. Others will be chary of an *ad hoc* accommodation with awkward but undeniable facts of morality—a difficulty neatly avoided by the anti-particularist ‘deep contextualism’ of Lance and Little, friendly as it is to ‘porous’ generalisations (Lance and Little 2008, 68–73).

elements. First, it would show how it is possible to be committed to the fight against torture, say, even while one admits that torture is actually called for on occasions. Second, it would show how it is possible for someone rationally to select one or two of the admittedly many abhorrent types of act (as we might put it) to be those that she is especially concerned to help eradicate' (Dancy 2004, 186). The second element is unremarkable, concerned as it is with a general problem; it is the first which gives us pause. How might we gauge Dancy's commitments? On the one hand, his wording suggests that it would be churlish to saddle him with the torture doctrine of the administration of George W. Bush. But on the other, his 'moderate' allegiance to 'default value' surely should oblige him to produce an example of the neutralisation or even reversal of a fundamental default which he endorses *in propria persona*.⁸¹ That he does not is peculiar, given his stated preference for philosophical examples.⁸² In any case, this is again totally anti-Aristotelian: Aristotle foresees no situation such that its features might reverse the polarity of matricide—for example. That is to say that Aristotelian ethics are moderately particularist, but principled.⁸³

In the next stage of this investigation we focus our attention on moral vision: how and what does the *phronimos* see? Is it the case that one or both of these questions must abide partly or wholly unanswered, given the particularity of perception? And could an episode of moral awareness be a literal act of perception? 'But how far and to what extent deviation from the mean is culpable is not easy to determine by reason: for

⁸¹ Cf. 'here the challenge to the holist is simple—to describe some possible case in which the fact that some action causes suffering to a non-rational sentient being does not count against it' (Crisp 2007, 45). 'Isn't it always wrong to torture an infant? We recoil at the mere thought of this. But is it impossible that an infant be afflicted (perhaps by brain manipulation) with a condition curable only by torture?' (Audi 2008, 34). This fails to prime my intuition pump.

⁸² 'I confess that I normally find examples more convincing than arguments' (Dancy 2004, 207).

⁸³ Irwin flatly denies that Aristotle is any sort of particularist; but that is because in his view such a claim entails that 'perceptual judgements about particular situations are *normatively prior* to general rules' (Irwin 2000, 102, emphasis added); and '... it would be illegitimate to argue from the moral insufficiency of general principles to the truth of particularism' (*ibid.* 104). Contrariwise, McNaughton and Rawling are avowed particularists who sanction 'moral verdict particularism' ('... a grasp of moral principles is insufficient for the correct moral appreciation of the particular case' (McNaughton and Rawling 2000, 256)), who nevertheless, *contra* Dancy, 'urge a more moderate position that acknowledges the truth and importance of certain weak moral principles' (*ibid.* 257).

nor is any other perceptible; and such things are among the particulars, and their judgement is in perception.’⁸⁴ Let us conjure up the *phronimos* whose honed faculties competently estimate the deviation of some remark of mine from the ideal of tactfulness: what does he see which others miss? A first point—and one which we shall revisit in detail—is that the eye of practical wisdom must itself have witnessed my blunder: a report, be it ever so meticulous, could never fill the bill. Second, we have no trouble grasping that what the wise person perceives might well exceed the expressive resources of any but a Henry James: for instance, that my comment caused you to smile wryly rather than to wince with hurt feelings might be what makes it crass but not outrageous; yet the *phronimos* who is not James⁸⁵ may have no other option than to have recourse to bare pointing—‘I base my judgement on *that* facial expression’. It is, after all, only to be expected that untrammelled powers of perception will outrun linguistic description, so that we cling to whatever is demonstratively expressible to effect reference. And even if our *phronimos* has all the articulacy and eloquence in the world, that will not empower him to convey to us either that or why I was socially inept, but not monstrously so.⁸⁶ His inference—if that is what it is—cannot be shared, and such incommunicability is a hallmark of perceptual experience (if not unique to it).

⁸⁴ ὁ δὲ μέγρι τίνος καὶ ἐπὶ πόσον ψεκτός οὐ ῥάδιον τῷ λόγῳ ἀφορίσαι· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄλλο οὐδὲν τῶν αἰσθητῶν· τὰ δὲ τοιαῦτα ἐν τοῖς καθ’ ἕκαστα, καὶ ἐν τῇ αἰσθήσει ἡ κρείσις (EN II 9, 1109b20–23). Terry Irwin points out to me that if one rejects Bywater’s emendation καὶ τῇ αἰσθήσει for the καὶ of the mss. in the companion passage (IV 5, 1126b3–4), one might construe the dative τῇ αἰσθήσει in ἐν γὰρ τοῖς καθ’ ἕκαστα καὶ τῇ αἰσθήσει ἡ κρείσις as instrumental, and use this to explain what is meant in the earlier passage. I am happy to forgo the emendation; but would not be happy to conclude that the instrumental dative might somehow imply that perception on its own is insufficient for reaching the particular verdict. Were that to follow from the grammar, then Bywater’s attempt to harmonise the passages would be attractive; and there is no textual variation in 1109b22–23.

⁸⁵ Surely a possibility, *pace* Martha Nussbaum: ‘... the moral agent, to the extent to which she is good, shares in the abilities of the novelist’ (Nussbaum 1990, 84).

⁸⁶ ‘For wisdom’s eye actually to see as it should rather than look myopically in generalised right directions, it needs more than the qualities that make for character-excellence; it also needs cleverness ... , penetration, thoughtfulness, and the experience necessary for shrewd reflection. In a word, wisdom requires practical intelligence ... This is because it deals with particulars, by which Aristotle means not merely that its objects are not logical universals, but that the standard groupings of them, reflected in the general terms of our language, cannot be expected always to capture what is significant from the practical point of view. The truly practical agent looks upon his situation not simply as a *PQR*

But third, the thesis that right moral judgement is not rule-bound, codifiable or even (altogether) expressible is one thing; the proposition that right moral judgement is true moral vision is a further, contentious idea. Taylor is sceptical: ‘it is not clear how much illumination is cast by the description of that decision as based on perception. If the correct dose for the typical patient is between 2 and 2.5 mg, is it plausible that in this particular case the doctor “just sees” that the correct dose is precisely 2.36 mg? It is more likely that the particular decision is itself based on certain rough generalisations ... Here the crucial notion is that of experience rather than strictly that of perception. Experience is of course grounded in perception; the experienced doctor has seen lots of similar cases. But that experience is typically summed up in general considerations of the kind instanced, which guide, without wholly determining, the eventual decision’ (Taylor 2006, 70). This is not a fair cop. First, Aristotle does not at all underplay experience’s contribution to judgement: ‘so that one should pay no less attention to the undemonstrated statements and opinions of experienced and older people or of the practically wise than to demonstrations: they see correctly because they have an eye which comes from experience.’⁸⁷ Thus it is not the case, as Taylor would have it, that a bunch of initial perceptions, the raw material for inductive generalisation, are then summarily discarded. Experience must supervene on perception, but does not supersede it, as is shown by the final clause of the quotation. Without *empeiria*, the eye of moral intelligence cannot see much, because it really doesn’t know what it is looking at, inexperienced as it is in what matters to us. But the need for the learner who is to develop into a fully-fledged *phronimos* to have exposure to an abundant set of ethical phenomena does not demonstrate that his mature judgements are not perceptual—or quasi-perceptual, to hedge our bets. Of course it is not plausible that ‘the doctor “just sees” that the correct dose is precisely 2.36 mg’. An Aristotelian doctor would anyhow never prescribe so precise a dosage. (And no Greek doctor *could* subscribe to ‘the correct dose for the typical patient is between 2 and 2.5 mg’, since they had no quantitative means of specifying what is normal within a given

situation, even where that description is true and relevant, but as *this P, this Q, this R*, scanning for particularities that could upset rules and forecasts founded on something’s being *P, Q or R*, or any combination, in the abstract’ (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 49).

⁸⁷ ὥστε δεῖ προσέχειν τῶν ἐμπείρων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἢ φρονίμων ταῖς ἀναποδείκτοις φάσεσι καὶ δόξαις οὐχ ἥττον τῶν ἀποδείξεων· διὰ γὰρ τὸ ἔχειν ἐκ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ὅμματα ὁρῶσιν ὁρθῶς (EN VI 11, 1143b11–14).

population.) ‘Just’ is a shifty adverb. Absent the illegitimate quantitative precision, if it signifies ‘without ratiocination’, why not? But if it implies that perception in and of itself is too impoverished to hit the mark, that is to beg the question against the perceptual model.⁸⁸

‘Practical wisdom is antithetical to intellect, since intellect is of definitions of which there is no account, while practical wisdom is of what is final, of which there is not scientific knowledge, but rather perception—not perception of the special sensibles, but like that by which we perceive that the final mathematical figure is a triangle; for the process stops in that case too. (However, this last is perception rather than practical wisdom, albeit a species different from perception of the special sensibles).’⁸⁹ Aristotle’s differentiation between kinds of perception gives us the opportunity to get to grips with one outstanding issue: is moral vision literally perceptual, or merely quasi-perceptual? Aristotle is very fond of visual

⁸⁸ Taylor goes on to extenuate his criticism: ‘medicine is an example of a kind of practice where experience is formulable in fairly rich generalisations which guide decisions without fully determining them. In other practices, such as steering a boat or playing an instrument, the role of generalisations is more attenuated and “getting a feel for it” correspondingly more important. Typically in such cases the right result is not specifiable except as the result which the skilled practitioner and observer can recognise as right ... Here it seems literally the case that “the judgement lies in the perception” (1109b24, 1126b4), as does not seem to be the case in medicine. Aristotle may accept this conception of experience as providing the dominant model for ethics; but his citing steersmanship and medicine together at 1104a9–10 suggests that he may not have differentiated the two’ (Taylor 2006, 71). Were it right that Aristotle illegitimately conflated medicine and navigation, it would still be possible that moral expertise resembles steersmanship much more closely, so that ethical perceptualism, as we might call it, remains unimpugned.

⁸⁹ ἀντίκειται μὲν δὴ τῷ νοῦ· ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς τῶν ὄρων, ὃν οὐκ ἔστι λόγος, ἡ δὲ τοῦ ἐσχατοῦ, οὗ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη ἀλλ’ αἴσθησις, οὐχ ἡ τῶν ἰδίων, ἀλλ’ οἷα αἰσθανόμεθα ὅτι τὸ ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς ἐσχατον τρίγωνον· στήσεται γὰρ κάκει. ἀλλ’ αὕτη μᾶλλον αἴσθησις ἢ φρόνησις, ἐκείνης δ’ ἄλλο εἶδος (EN VI 8, 1142a25–30). Broadie and Rowe’s explication of Aristotle’s toing and froing is helpful: ‘wise perception is first contrasted with hearing, taste, etc. by being likened to the perception of a geometer who sees, for example, a hexagon as consisting, finally, of triangles. (The contrast is: we can immediately taste simple qualities such as bitter and sweet, and so on for the other sense-modalities; whereas we cannot see the triangles as the last two-dimensional elements of the hexagon, or see such-and-such a particular action as the right decision, without first considering the *unanalysed* hexagon or the *unanalysed* project.) Aristotle then ... worries lest this shared contrast with sense-perception make the geometric case seem too much like wisdom; and finally ... worries lest his correction for the last worry make the geometric kind look too much like sense-perception. He is working against a Platonic background in which theoretical and practical reason were not properly distinguished, and in which a crude contrast between reason and sense-perception was commonly treated as exhaustive’ (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 375).

metaphors in his descriptions of our moral condition and development;⁹⁰ but his liking for the overtly metaphorical in some instances does not debar us from interpreting him literally in others. *Phronêsis* lacks a special sense organ; there is no sensorium exclusive to it; and talk of a specialised ethical faculty makes me nervous, open as it is to abuse. Nevertheless, the texts I have quoted are unvarnished claims to the effect that the *phronimos* perceives the rights and wrongs of any given situation: we should find that rebarbative only if ethical perceptualism crashes between the stools of garden variety perception and figurative modes of expression.

Here are three reflections to be getting on with, in order of increasing interest—if only purchased, perhaps, at the cost of decreasing credibility. First, that Aristotle himself is unabashed in his commitment to literal perceptualism is irrefutable. If Aristotle says ‘this last is perception *rather than* practical wisdom’, that is to stave off any surreptitious assimilation of the three species of *bona fide* perception with which he is juggling—somewhat to our confusion. So perceptualism is to be taken seriously.

But that leaves the question of its cash value up in the air. This is the second reflection I have to offer: what is not actual cannot be perceived.⁹¹ Therefore hypothetical considerations are not within the ambit of perception; that is because any hypothetical representation, no matter how

⁹⁰ E.g. ἡ δ' ἔξις τῷ ὄμματι τοῦτω γίνεται τῆς ψυχῆς οὐκ ἄνευ ἀρετῆς (EN VI 12, 1144a29–30); ὥσπερ σώματι ἰσχυρῷ ἄνευ ὀψεως κινουμένων συμβαίνει σφάλλῃσθαι ἰσχυρῶς διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν ὄψιν, οὕτω καὶ ἐνταῦθα· ἐὰν δὲ λάβῃ νοῦν, ἐν τῷ πράττειν διαφέρει (EN VI 13, 1144b10–13). ‘Occasion by occasion, one knows what to do, if one does, not by applying universal principles, but by being a certain kind of person: *one who sees situations in a certain distinctive way*’ (McDowell 1998a, 73, emphasis added): literal or metaphorical? Neoaristotelian particularists are typically reticent on this score—although elsewhere what McDowell explicitly develops as the analogy between values and secondary qualities lays the ground for the (rhetorical?) question, ‘perhaps with Aristotle’s notion of practical wisdom in mind, one might ask why a training of the feelings (as long as the notion of feeling is comprehensive enough) cannot be the cultivation of an ability—utterly unmysterious just because of its connections with feelings—to spot (if you like) the fitnesses of things ...’ (McDowell 1998b, 147). And further, in his acceptance of Blackburn’s requirement that ethical truth be ‘earned’: ‘... one would be deceiving oneself if one thought that those vague analogies with perception amounted to earning it’ (McDowell 1998c, 155).

⁹¹ Compare and contrast Aristotle’s supposition that only an actual, particular offending agent can arouse anger: ἀνάγκη τὸν ὀργιζόμενον ὀργίζεσθαι αἰεὶ τῶν καθ’ ἑκάστων τι, οἷον Κλέωνι ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀνθρώπῳ (Rhetoric II 2, 1378a33–34). The claim is only speciously plausible. True, unlike some other *pathê*, anger does require that either I or my associates, who are all particular people, figure within the situation wherein the offence is felt to occur. Of course if the situation is actual—I witness someone insulting my wife—then my anger is directed at a real individual. However, the situation might be imaginary. If so, I can manage to get genuinely worked up by imagining that someone or other insults

detailed, nevertheless inevitably preserves residual generality and indeterminacy, such that one can never dispose of the possibility that further specifications would deliver different, and perhaps incompatible, 'right' answers.⁹² In contrast, when one is actually going to act, the real, particular situation is such that it ought to be possible—in principle, at least—to apprise oneself of each and every germane feature therein, in that particular, and possibly unique, combination: and how else to designate that comprehensive awareness of exactly what is going on, if not as perception? One might retort: but universals *are* perceptible, so the argument collapses!⁹³ And there is even an explicit Aristotelian pronouncement, which would seem to clinch the matter: 'for although the particular is perceived, perception is of the universal—e.g. of man, not of the man Calias'.⁹⁴ However, the context is quite special: Aristotle is straining to establish that, despite originating in perception—which, one had thought, is *of* particulars—the process he is trying to describe at the end of the *Posterior Analytics* might nevertheless produce universals; thus he is at pains to convince us that universals must be present in, and extractable from, perception. For this he requires that we do not perceive bare particularity—and what would that be?—but rather that we perceive things *as* falling under one or another universal (not that it is for perception as such to

my wife; however, since the infuriating fantasy might be schematic—all there is to the object of my anger is that he utters some slighting remark—it is not true that he need be a fleshed-out individual.

⁹² '... it is not theoretically possible to make provision in advance for the exception of extraordinary cases; for one can theoretically always suppose a further special context for each special context, which puts *it* in a new light' (Anscombe 1981b, 23). But does this not throw up an ostensible problem? That is, one should have thought that the *phronimos* would prove most adept in dealing with counterfactuals, just as he is second to none in action; and, of course, this is not a coincidence (cf. on the Socratic conception of virtue: 'the task of deciding how, in response to a given occasion, a judicious man would actually do it, though a theoretical one, may call for the good judgement requisite in judicious practice itself' (Burnyeat 1971, 218)). Yet it would seem that distinct abilities must be in play. The solution is that *phantasia* takes over from *aisthêsis* when one moves from the actual to the conjectural; and that the superiority of the wise person's imagination is not coincidentally linked to the keenness with which he sees right and wrong. Away from theoretical analysis, the complete wisdom of the *phronimos* consists in a fusion of perception, experience and imagination.

⁹³ As, in fact, did M.M. McCabe, in her reaction to this paper at the Keeling Colloquium.

⁹⁴ καὶ γὰρ αἰσθάνεται μὲν τὸ καθ' ἕκαστον, ἢ δ' αἰσθησις τοῦ καθόλου ἐστίν, οἷον ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλ' οὐ Καλλίου ἀνθρώπου (*Posterior Analytics* II 19, 100a16–b1). Bob Sharpley reminded me of this pivotal text, and also helped me towards an understanding of it which might be reconciled with the kind of particularism I attribute to Aristotle.

comprehend the universal *qua* universal). Only particulars are actual and so perceptible, but they are sensed *as* actualisations of universals; and furthermore a given object circumstanced thus-and-so actualises a combination of universal features which is not only a particular realisation, but also, possibly, a unique one. The direction of argument here is not from the particularist to the perceptualist character of moral expertise, but rather from the very possibility of expertise in ethics to the supposition that there is moral vision. Deny that premiss, and this case for perceptualism lapses; but that there is *phronêsis* is an unquestioned tenet for Aristotle, however questionable some of us may find it.

The third reflection attempts to win us round to a perspective from which it is only natural to take moral vision literally—and indeed maybe inevitable for star cases. Recollect the *phronimos* who decides how far I have strayed from the ideal of tact; he adjudicates on the basis of the particular look on your face. The *pathê* show themselves in facial expression and body language; and proper sensitivity to these emotional manifestations is absolutely necessary for interpersonal deportment. Now I shall be employing ‘*to see*’ as a real perceptual predicate (*viz* idioms like ‘oh, I see!’ need not be proper tokens of the predicate, strictly intended). When the *phronimos* calculates that my gaffe isn’t all that bad, he *sees* just how you feel; and that perception feeds immediately into his visualisation of my tort. Why should this appear at all absurd, let alone patently so? It will seem ridiculous to philosophers hostile to the objectivity of moral judgement, or leery of perceptual experience’s having rich content; on neither count does anyone remotely sympathetic to Aristotelianism have anything of which to be spontaneously incredulous.⁹⁵

To expand on the incredulity, making it more tractable: Aristotelian perceptualism as I have roughed it out might seem vulnerable to a nasty elaboration of the ‘argument from queerness’: seeing how it successfully eludes that argument will also have the side-benefit of clarifying the nature and strength of the perceptualist’s commitments. The ‘argument from queerness’ in its canonical formulation: ‘if there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, *utterly different* from anything else in the universe. Correspondingly, if we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception or intuition, *utterly different* from our ordinary ways

⁹⁵ McNaughton 1988, 55–57 frames a cognitivist-realist defence of the observability of moral properties which does not rest on any particular theory of perception.

of knowing everything else.’⁹⁶ The Aristotelian’s immediate rejoinder is to mark a distinction. On the one hand, since our natural perceptual organs serve to transmit both garden variety and moral information, there are no grounds for the sneaky insinuation that an ontology of objective values need bring in its train an epistemology forced into supernaturalism by the pretence that we can—somehow—get at such queer things. On the other, that the moral is *sui generis* must not be captiously inflated into the unfriendly presumption that it is *ipso facto* odd or disturbing. The distinction in place, the perceptualist accepts with equanimity the sober truth concealed in the allegation that good and bad are there to be seen in the world.

But this rejoinder will only prompt the response that the Aristotelian theory raises the difficulties encumbering objectivism in an especially acute and aggravated form. ‘A dilemma: talk of “moral vision” is either innocuous, if a confessedly trivial *façon de parler*, or dangerously obscurantist, if it is to import a perceptual model without explication of how good and bad might be apprehensible without mediation; otherwise, if moral evaluations are inferences, using the language of perception is a shady pretence. Next, directly apprehensible moral properties would be simple ones, that is, awfully queer cousins of traditional secondary qualities. To make matters worse, it is not in fact the case that different people perceive invariant secondary qualities, as even philosophers wont to look askance at their ontological credentials have all too automatically conceded: across societies, and indeed individuals within some grouping, differences in hue, luminosity and saturation figure variously in how they make discriminations in colour perception.’⁹⁷ Thus one might well be tempted to conclude that if e.g. the semantic ranges of none of ancient Greek *χλωρόν*, French “blond” or English “green” have anything like an exact equivalent in any other natural language, the parochial colours which they denote are exposed for the narrowly localised projections they are: so very much the worse for their queer cousins, as some cultural relativists have long suspected. Therefore one should finally deduce that

⁹⁶ Mackie 1977, 38, emphasis added. Cf. ‘[the projective theory] asks no more than this: a natural world, and patterns of reaction to it. By contrast a theory assimilating moral understanding to perception demands more of the world. Perception is a causal process: we perceive those features of things which are responsible for our experiences. It is uneconomical to postulate both a feature of things (the values they have) *and* a mechanism (intuition) by which we are happily aware of it’ (Blackburn 1984, 182).

⁹⁷ See the persuasive exposition in Lloyd 2007, 9–22.

following the recommended escape route away from the argument from queerness merely lands one with culture-specific, ergo *ersatz*, objects of moral perception.'

A wrinkle on the argument. The opponent might, as a secondary attack, launch a putative *reductio ad absurdum*: 'if moral perceptualism is an Aristotelian theory, then how is it that moral "vision" is not accompanied by moral "hearing", "touch", "smell" and "taste"? The theory would be obliged to acknowledge that the absence of analogues to the non-visual sense modalities is worthy of remark, and explain why they are missing. Aristotle does no such thing because the perceptual language is always metaphorical. And if we find the mere concept of e.g. moral "smell" grotesque, that is because visual experience is uniquely fit for metaphorical applications—but a natural metaphor must not be confused with a literal statement'. The defence comes in two parts. First, postulation of the missing analogues is not, as a matter of fact, grotesque, so their absence does not speak to the purported concealment of the outlandishness of real moral vision beneath the cloak of figurative language. For consider: 'your savage dismissal of her complaint grates harshly on my ears'; 'I recoiled from his slimy innuendo'; 'their treatment of employees stinks!'; 'I could see that you were nauseated by his callous disregard for the children's welfare'—these expressions are every bit as 'natural' as visual language, and in principle might have prompted some other moral perceptualist to develop a theory which ranged across the modalities (this hypothetical theorist would have much to glean from Darwin 1998). Second, that Aristotle himself is not an across-the-board perceptualist is explicable: according to his philosophy of perception, skewed as it is in favour of human animals and engineered to cater for some dodgy beliefs about the innate superiority of the human faculties, the modalities are ranked in a hierarchy with the distal senses at the top.⁹⁸ Thus he could, of course, have recognised moral analogues to the other modalities which would yield only low-grade information (e.g. a gut-feeling of repugnance might be triggered by the truthful but imprecise sense that something is very wrong, while vision alone would be capable of perceiving exactly what is responsible); but he didn't, intent as he was on the fine detail accessible only, as he assumes, to the *eye* of the *phronimos*.

So I have smoothed out the wrinkle; back to the dilemma. The Aristotelian comeback again has two stages. First, why grant the proposi-

⁹⁸ Implied by *De Anima* II 3, 415a3–6, II 9, 421a9–11; explicitly at III 3, 429a2–3, 'sight is perception most of all' (ἡ ὄψις μάλιστα αἰσθησίς ἐστι).

tion that non-inferential awareness of moral properties must incorporate, let alone be nothing more than, an unmediated grasp of simple properties? And this is the root of the claimed absurdity: that just as I happen to glimpse a patch of red, so too I manage to catch sight of a patch of dishonesty—one predictably protests that tokens of the virtues and vices, because never atomic, are necessarily imperceptible. But now the Aristotelian presses into service the thesis that the *properly* perceptible is not coextensive with the *directly* perceptible. The idea that I might *sensu stricto* catch sight of the son of Diares off in the distance—see that it is he—might be met with howls of derision from the Socrates of the *Theaetetus*. One must not be put off by Aristotle's reservation that the likes of the son of Diares are *aisthêta kata sumbebêkos* (DA II 6, 418a21–22), inasmuch as he happens to be the white object which we directly see, and that white thing is *aisthêton kath' hauto*: that our eyes are acted upon by the colour does not detract from the fact that we do indeed, albeit indirectly, perceive the man;⁹⁹ and nor from the fact that some of us might be capable of perceiving that he is conducting himself in a reprehensible manner. Second, with regard to the charge of relativistic unreality, we counter that so far from being tarred with the same brush, garden variety and moral vision are exculpated in tandem: that any or all species of vision are (partially) cultured modes of awareness hardly renders them bogus.¹⁰⁰

According to *De Anima*, since lower forms of soul are subsumed as potentialities within forms above them in the psychic hierarchy, their workings within superior and inferior forms of life are not of a kind: the nutrition of an insentient dandelion is to be separated off from what goes on in the gizzard of a chicken, subservient as the latter is to the fowl's locomotive and perceptual way of being; and the desires and perceptions of people are *sui generis*, because human wants and sensory experience are uniquely suffused with our rationality. If so much is clear enough, one of the great *lacunae* in the Aristotelian corpus is human psychology as such: *De Anima* gives us the soul of animals in general, and scattered remarks on human capacities (e.g. *phantasia*); some of the *Parva Naturalia* (e.g. *De Memoria*) examines what our minds alone can do, or do best. What we do not find is any even skeletal, let alone

⁹⁹ See Brunschwig 1996b for an appealingly economical interpretation of the commonality of the *koina aisthêta*, and a lucid explication of the relations between particular, common and accidental objects of perception.

¹⁰⁰ Eloquently argued in McDowell 1998b.

systematic, exposition of how a perception's being human and rational impinges on what content we attribute to it, and how it might best be analysed. If that means that proof positive for our interpretation is not to be had, in compensation we should also not unthinkingly assume that the upper bound on the fecundity of Aristotelian perception, in the strict sense of 'perception', is in any way obvious.

Hence I do not see (not a proper token, this time) why an Aristotelian should repine at *seeing* that someone is in pain. And that she, in front of me, is now visibly in pain furnishes me with a *prima facie* reason to react befittingly; because the morally significant fact is fraught with normative implications, there is a seamless connection between its perception and my impulse to intervene.¹⁰¹ These are star instances of literal moral vision. I confess that I cannot run my story for the *phronimos* who sees (*sees?*) that £15 would make an adequate donation to the person on the doorstep soliciting for a given charity; one would have to fall back on uncodifiability and so forth, leavened with an appeal to the phenomenology of what it is like to be embedded in situations calling for a moral reaction, to make the case for this being literal perception.¹⁰² If my cumulative argument remains programmatic, I still believe that there is more than enough here to stop philosophers not inimical to the existence of moral truth from scoffing that the theory that it is richly perceived is delusory.¹⁰³ Were a stickler to insist that we have secured only

¹⁰¹ So we repudiate Mackie's loaded and question-begging misdescription of what must go on: 'it is not even sufficient to postulate a faculty which "sees" the wrongness: something must be postulated which can see at once the natural features that constitute the cruelty, and the wrongness, and *the mysterious consequential link between the two*' (Mackie 1977, 41, emphasis added).

¹⁰² Distinguish some cases of giving money away: (i) one donates a £5 note, *basta*; viz e.g. £5.13 would constitute a precisifying absurdity. (i) is not to be assimilated to (ii) indiscriminately thrusting all the coins in one's pocket into the beggar's hand (to calculate would be mean-minded). (i) and (ii) are not to be assimilated to (iii) dividing up the contents of one's charitable pot between a number of worthy causes, a frequent and unavoidable exercise which trivially necessitates precision—which precision, however, is consequent on equitable proportions respected by a set of alternative divisions, choice between which remains casual. The further sorting out of various kinds of appropriate generous responses might serve to elucidate the lines of affiliation linking moderate particularism to perceptualism.

¹⁰³ Cf. Wiggins on the strengths and weaknesses of 'situational appreciation', his 'paraphrase' of *aisthêsis* (Wiggins 1980, 237). Blum 1994, in its thoughtful and sustained analysis of just what 'situational perception' might come to, makes for rewarding reading. His contention that such perception is not a 'unified capacity', on the grounds that 'particular persons are better at perceiving certain sorts of particulars than other sorts' (Blum 1994, 46), gives one a vivid sense of the distance separating Aristotle's conception of the

the quasi-perceptual status of moral vision, I am not sure that this would amount to much more than a call for piffling semantic legislation: the ethical perceptualist is happy with the result that moral discernment is, in its logical structure and phenomenology, sufficiently similar to literal perception as not to vitiate the doctrine.¹⁰⁴

But the third reflection carries a sting in its tail. Back to Socrates at the battle of Delium. One would be right to think that how his prowess is actualised is another star instance of moral vision. Ahead of him he notices a small but threatening Boeotian contingent, and out of the corner of his eye he spots yet more menacing forces in a ravine to the left. Athenians are scattered pell-mell all over the place. Socrates *sees* that by setting off up the slope to his right at this moment, swaggering in his customary manner, he will put heart in his fellow-citizens who will follow him away in good order, and dissuade the Thebans from giving chase. He gets it just right as to timing, body language, the distance he maintains from the foe, and so forth; and the perceptualist says that this is the eye of valour guiding a stalwart nature in the ways of authentic courage. Is this not a textbook case of the futility of rule-following? Both Socrates and the *megalopsuchos* walk with a distinctive stride particular to them, apposite for their circumstances—or rather, perhaps, Socrates' strutting about as if he were safely at home in the Athenian *agora* is the beautifully inappropriate, courageous thing to do. No procedure, whether relying on rules of thumb or precise algorithms, could churn out either moral vision's assessment of the peril or its particular perception of how best to avert disaster—or so the Aristotelian claims.

And another anecdote of the battlefield. A drone aircraft 'sees' that a number of its allies, both human and robotic, are endangered; after swift consultation with a strategic computer, it is authorised to dispatch a clutch of 'smart' missiles which make short work of the enemy. Now let alone employing '*to see*' as a real perceptual predicate which signifies moral vision, I am using scare-quotes to quash any suggestion that battle robots run by military software are cognisant of what they do (others may not feel nearly so inhibited). The fact remains that the robot simulates

entirely unoccluded and all-embracing vision of the *phronimos* from the modern presumption that 'blind spots' are compatible with unimpeded perception elsewhere in the field of moral discernment.

¹⁰⁴ I omit discussion of the impenetrable passage *EN* VI 11, 1143a35–b5, on intellection of both theoretical and practical ultimates, and how *nous* is perception of these *eschata*. Comment would be redundant, since we have the reading of Broadie at her (characteristically dense) best (Broadie 1991, 254–256).

not only garden variety perception, but also the moral vision of the doughty warrior; and does so effectively so long as it does not encounter a constellation of factors for which its algorithmic brain was not designed. I am neither a military buff nor up on cybernetics, but I presume that the 'courageous', rule-driven machine which I am contemplating is, if not on active duty, at the very least experimental rather than thought-experimental.¹⁰⁵

By and large I make a decent job of negotiating a busy city street. I walk along unimpeded, neither halting nor bumping into other pedestrians. How do I achieve this? I really have no idea: even when I am in a rush and the street is congested so that I am conscious of judging the gaps in the traffic and choosing my moment to slip through, I do not know how the perceptual input generates the motor output.¹⁰⁶ Still and all, if the computational theory of vision is part of the explanation of my urban navigation, then my perceptions and consequent movements are every bit as rule-driven as those of the cybernetic fighter. A necessary distinction: that perception is rule-driven is an aetiological claim which in no wise assimilates what I perceive to what the homunculi within me do—what they do enables *me*, not *them*, to perceive. When I say that I do not know how the perceptual input generates the motor output, I refer to a double ignorance. The first—that I have only a smattering of computational theory—we may set aside. But we should pause over the second: namely, that I could never become aware of what the homunculi which inhabit the modular units of my mind are up to, as they discharge mathematical tasks exceeding my computational abilities by far.

¹⁰⁵ And a non-militaristic version. A grand master can sometimes instantaneously see what move to make, without making any calculations. And a powerful chess computer can react instantaneously more often than not—but is an algorithmic engine. Both the master and the computer operate within the rules constitutive of the game—there could be no such activity as Dancy-chess—and sometimes the master systematically calculates the cascade of consequences of a hypothetical move, in the manner of the computer, if only very infrequently with the machine's exhaustiveness. But just what is going on, when the master seems to *see* where the piece should be placed?

¹⁰⁶ Wu discusses an analogous case, attributed to Cussins, intended to show that visual content must be non-conceptual, on the grounds that the navigator 'guides her action by attending to relevant aspects of the environment, yet she need not have spatial concepts of the right specificity even as she accurately adjusts her path in light of what she sees' (Wu 2008, 1003). He argues *contra*, on the basis of a very plausible argument for the necessary involvement of concepts in the visual perception and manipulation of artefacts (although 'the precise scope of state conceptualism regarding vision in action remains to be determined' (1028)). This argument should encourage Aristotelian convictions concerning rich perceptual content.

Whether the fact that one's homunculi function below the level of consciousness is shallow or profound is a tenacious issue for the philosophy of mind. What I want to take from it is the sting in the tail. Garden variety perception is canonical perception; so if the garden variety, despite its phenomenology, is brought about by algorithmic processes, why not admit the disconcerting possibility that moral vision is likewise causally dependent on rule-following, but that having such perceptions feels awfully like ordinary sense experience—which is generated by sub-personal computation? A pair of essential stipulations. No one has produced a sound argument—yet?—proving that the supervenience of garden variety perception on computation reduces conscious experience, in either its functional or qualitative aspects, to the epiphenomenal. In tandem, we should regard the possibility of subvenient moral algorithms as unsettling because unexpected, not in the fear that were the possibility realised, it would make a sham of ethics. And however this might play out, for sure we shall be left with a major disanalogy: that we have no reason to believe that the moral algorithms, if they exist, need elude our conscious awareness and thus be immune to revision, or even partial or wholesale rejection.

Cass Sunstein contends that, just as psychological research has revealed that people rely on so-called 'fast and frugal' heuristic principles so as to simplify probabilistic calculation and prediction under uncertainty, so too in the realm of morality and politics we might expect that our cogitations are similarly reliant on rules of thumb 'that often work well but that sometimes misfire': 'in fact the central point seems obvious. Much of everyday morality consists of simple, highly intuitive rules that generally make sense but that fail in certain cases' (Sunstein 2007, 156). Sunstein goes some considerable distance towards justifying his broad thesis through the citation of telling empirical data to do with risk assessment: his findings do indeed seem to suggest that the moral heuristics brought to bear were too fast or too frugal.¹⁰⁷ Again, the psychologist Paul Slovic alleges that what causes our very widespread failure to respond proportionately to the plight of large groups of people

¹⁰⁷ 'Often risk-related heuristics represent generalisations from a range of problems for which they are indeed well-suited, and hence most of the time, such heuristics work well. The problem comes when the generalisations are wrenched out of context and treated as freestanding or universal principles, applicable to situations in which their justifications no longer operate' (Sunstein 2007, 156).

who have suffered a catastrophe is the fact that 'our ability to discriminate among quantities is finely tuned when dealing with small amounts but quickly degrades as the numbers get larger'.¹⁰⁸

What to say about these explosive proposals? First, they are aimed at the deficits of 'everyday morality', when it is put to work in an alien environment. Our interpersonal heuristic strategies evolved to expedite and regulate face-to-face interactions within small-scale communities, whose members were mutual acquaintances; engaged with either the liability of a faceless corporation or the anonymity and distance of the suffering multitude, they break down. An Aristotelian ethicist might seek to ward off the competition from such evolutionary and rule-based theories of morality by conceding that the calculations of the *hoi polloi* may be products of economical rules of thumb, while insisting that the deliberations of the *phronimos* are anomalous in their elegant congruity with the infinite particulars; but this evasive move would be ill-considered. The *phronimos* is a rare paragon; but he is *our* paragon, in that he has reached the culmination of the moral progress on which a reasonable proportion of the members of a healthy society have successfully embarked; Aristotle could not tolerate a Stoic-like isolation and exaltation of virtue. Second and furthermore, the Aristotle who so emphatically denies that a very populous community could function as a proper city (*Politics* VII 4) is not well-placed to execute any manoeuvres against such rivals: for he has already confined morality to the intimate territory within which they concede that its reliance on rules and other cognitive limitations will not make themselves apparent. When in conclusion we shortly turn to Aristotle legislating for the good, we shall find that a pervasive ambiguity in his conception of that legislation, regardless of his promotion of cohesive personal knowledge, provokes searching questions about the nature of moral vision as it looks out for the common good. To my hesitant way of thinking, the responsible philosophical jury would be best-advised to withhold its verdict on the merits of moral particularism and assorted perceptualism, as against the 'fast and frugal' analysis.

¹⁰⁸ Thompson (2007). 'You could argue that we're simply callous, or hypocrites. But Slovic doesn't think so. The problem isn't a moral failing: it's a cognitive one. We're very good at processing the plight of tiny groups of people but horrible at conceptualising the suffering of large ones.' If this is accurate reportage, then Slovic has misinterpreted his results—he labours under the misconception that the cognitive and the moral are exclusive categories.

I conclude, as is my wont, in *aporia*: whether the fault is entirely my own, or Aristotle must share some of the blame, is not for me to decide. Dancy demands: 'what we are looking for is some positive suggestion as to why the behaviour of moral reasons might *need* to be capturable in some principled way, even though we continue to respect the truth of holism' (Dancy 2004, 83). He proposes: 'one is that morality is essentially a system of social constraints, and as such it must meet certain conditions. It must be reasonably simple, so as to be operable by the populace at large. It must be explicit, so as to give clear guidance so far as possible. And it must be regular, so that we can tell in advance what effects this or that feature will have on how we and others should behave. My own view about this is that it is a description of something like a set of traffic regulations' (*ibid.*). The acidulous put-down is unjustified.¹⁰⁹ Anyone with experience of Mediterranean driving will enthusiastically testify that the virtues of such regulation are not trivial; and the unargued assumption that there is a categorial difference between how these quotidian rules channel the flow of traffic and the means by which we might best shape loftier forms of intercourse is unwarranted.

Let us revert to the learner's need for properly salient illustration of what to pursue and what to avoid. We can now elaborate on the grounds already rehearsed which necessitate ethical perception,¹¹⁰ and strengthen the claim that only the *phronimos* should, ideally, be entrusted with moral nurture: anyone else will be prone to misdirect the learner's attention to what they think is a nice example of how to behave, but is shot through with blemishes all too likely to corrupt the inchoate disposition to virtue.¹¹¹ Let us imagine, then, that the conditions for moral paedagogy

¹⁰⁹ 'Insofar as they reject general moral principles, particularists leave us unable to form confident expectations about what they will do ... The overall plausibility of a moral view is seriously impaired if it denies that one of the points of morality is to increase the probability of conformity with certain mutually beneficial practices' (Hooker 2000, 22).

¹¹⁰ Woods argues *à propos* of the acquisition of a *phantasia tou agathou* in *EN* III 5 that 'the perceptual language suggests a cognitive process, and one that it would be natural to attribute to the rational part of the soul. Aristotle seems to envisage two things as going on concurrently in the course of an individual's moral development; the direction of his impulses, desires, etc., and the acquisition of a view about the good' (Woods 1986, 148).

¹¹¹ 'Why should a given kind of virtuous action require the unrestricted practical wisdom that would be wise on every front? Presumably it is because the situation faced by, say, the courageously disposed agent has dimensions to which courage is irrelevant. The courageous response that failed to take account of these in the right way might be wrong or wrongly executed. It might be unjust or unnecessarily brutal' (Broadie 1991, 259; cf. McDowell 1998a, 52–53). And: 'the morally mixed character need not be an incoherent personality, and the mixed ethical description is only too often true. But in Aristotle, the

are (quite unrealistically) optimal: the teacher is a *phronimos*, his attentive and biddable charges carry the seeds of virtue dormant within them. One might fear that a dilemma looms. Rules are palpably to the fore in the immature phases of moral habituation: younger children must adhere to them strictly, since they lack the character and understanding to go even a few steps on their own way.¹¹² The still callow but reflective and responsible adolescent begins to recognise exceptions, and can exercise some independent judgement. Yet if the progression is carried through to the end, what issues forth is a *phronimos* who, of course, respects absolute prohibitions, but abjures rules when it comes to the virtuous acts which he performs—and that seems a violent and inexplicable disjunction. But this semblance persists only so long as one ignores the variety of means the moral educator has at his disposal for the gradual internalisation of shared norms: the progression is sustained without stepwise bumps.¹¹³

We have put paid to the false dilemma; it is when politics rears its head that one is vexed to retain the sense that Aristotle has a clear and consistent attitude towards the particularism of ethics on the one hand, and the generalised ameliorative ambitions of high-minded politics on the other.¹¹⁴ ‘Political expertise and practical wisdom are the same disposi-

various characters and their kinds of action are models of what ought or ought not to be ... A mixed pair of ethical terms can hold of the same subject, but then this subject is not an appropriate model, since a model should not send mixed messages’ (Broadie 1991, 259).

¹¹² Young children ‘... can and must enter the palace of Reason through the courtyard of Habit and Tradition’ (Peters 1963, 55).

¹¹³ Burnyeat 1980 remains the classic and unbettered study of Aristotelian acculturation. ‘We are inclined to be impressed by the sparseness of the teaching that leaves someone capable of autonomously going on in the same way ... it is a fact (*no doubt a remarkable fact*) that, against a background of common human nature and shared forms of life, one’s sensitivities to kinds of similarities between situations can be altered and enriched by just this sort of instruction’ (McDowell 1998a, 64, emphasis added). Successful moral habituation leaves us with a very tough conundrum, as Lovibond ably brings out when expounding Wittgenstein: ‘people gain a certain amount of experience of wearing clothes, making decisions about the length of their trousers and so on, and some of them, eventually, reach the point of not having to defer to anyone else’s authority about such things: “*That is all that happens*”. And if we could come up with an appropriate reference for “*That*”, we might say the same about ethics’ (Lovibond 2002, 61). If we could.

¹¹⁴ Not so for Martha Nussbaum, who insists that ‘Aristotle’s ideal person of practical wisdom is no solitary Jamesian heroine, but a politically active citizen of Athens; Pericles is an example’ (Nussbaum 1990, 98). Quite right (although one might quibble over the example), but her confidence that Aristotelian ‘perception is *the norm* for political rationality’ (*ibid.* 98, emphasis added) is oblivious to the tension I shall lay open: the section containing my quotations is blandly entitled ‘Public and Private: The Perceiver as Leader’. Nor for Gisela Striker: ‘... Aristotle does not spell out the universal premises of

tion, although their being is not the same. Of the disposition as it is concerned with the city, the architectonic form of practical wisdom is legislative expertise, while the form operative on particulars has the generic name “political expertise”; this latter is practical and deliberative, since a decree is the ultimate thing to be enacted.¹¹⁵ Aristotle is vigorous in his faith that ethical and political virtue not only marry up, but also constitute a partnership wherein ethics enjoys its final fruition as politics extends its sweep to society as a whole. In the complete abstract, such confidence is unexceptionable; but things become intensely problematic when we descend from this altitude to even the high level of abstraction whereon Aristotle initiates his discussion of what is involved in legislating for the good, when our duty is to do whatever we can for all the citizens, not merely to assist the élite audience in attendance at Aristotle’s lectures on ethics: discourses¹¹⁶ appear ‘... unable to turn the many towards nobility: for they do not naturally heed shame,¹¹⁷ but rather fear, nor do they abstain from committing mean offences on account of their

practical deliberation because he takes it to be obvious what they must be—namely the rules of justice in the wide sense in which, as Aristotle tells us in *EN* V, justice is “complete virtue in relation to others”. Aristotle believed that most if not all of those rules can be found in the laws of a well-ordered city ...’ (Striker 2006, 134); in her sequel (136 ff.) she tries to fill in this picture with a discussion of Aristotle on legislation. Striker’s insistence on coupling the *Ethics* and the *Politics* is commendable; however, inasmuch as she cannot take seriously the possibility of either moral vision or a morality not governed by rules, she also ducks rather than solves the problem I am facing.

¹¹⁵ ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἡ φρόνησις ἡ αὐτὴ μὲν ἔστις, τὸ μέντοι εἶναι οὐ τὰυτόν αὐταῖς. τῆς δὲ περὶ πόλιν ἢ μὲν ὡς ἀρχιτεκτονικὴ φρόνησις νομοθετικὴ, ἢ δὲ ὡς τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα τὸ κοινὸν ἔχει ὄνομα, πολιτικὴ· αὕτη δὲ πρακτικὴ καὶ βουλευτικὴ· τὸ γὰρ ψήφισμα πρακτὸν ὡς τὸ ἔσχατον (*EN* VI 8, 1141b23–28). Schofield’s discerning analysis of this passage should be consulted (Schofield 2006a, 318–319). Putting the final clause together with 1137b27–32 makes more graphic the point that the decree is at the interface between a law fixed in its generality and the dynamic exigencies of the particular case.

¹¹⁶ Rowe throughout X 9 misleadingly translates ‘words’, ‘talk’—my point being that while one should allow for a broad range of admonition, rhetorical exhortation and so forth as without impact on the despicable crowd outside the lecture hall, one should also not exclude *logos* in the sense of ‘argument’ or ‘reasoning’. ‘... some, perhaps most, people’s basic desires are already so corrupted that no amount of argument will bring them to see that virtue is desirable in and for itself ...’ (Burnyeat 1980, 81): the recognition of *only* argument as helpless is the error complementary to that instantiated in Rowe’s translation (and also in Crisp 2000b).

¹¹⁷ ‘Shame is the semivirtue of the learner. The learner is envisaged as a young person who lives by the feelings of the moment and for that reason makes mistakes. He wants to do noble things but sometimes does things that are disgraceful, ignoble, and then he feels ashamed of himself and his conduct’ (Burnyeat 1980, 78). No semivirtuous precursor, no possibility of moral progress.

shamefulness, but rather on account of the punishments. For living by emotion as they do, they pursue the pleasures suited to them and those things which will give rise to these pleasures, and flee the opposing pains, but do not even have a conception of what is fine and truly pleasant,¹¹⁸ since they have not had a taste of it.¹¹⁹ Aristotle seems comfortable in consigning the greatest number of the citizens to a status below any hope of moral reclamation, incapable as *logos* is of 'getting at' them;¹²⁰ but why doesn't a philosopher whose meritocratic inclinations do not condone a Platonic splitting away of the good citizen from the good man¹²¹ feel some unease at abandoning any prospect of improving most of the people in society, not merely keeping them in line?¹²²

Much of the last chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is taken up with the question of how one might most efficiently protect and cultivate the pre- and nascently reflective virtuous disposition, so as at least to maximise the fraction of the worthy few against the disproportionate mass of the irredeemable. Penal legislation will curb the ugly proclivities of the latter; civic legislation which covers the upbringing of children promises to minimise the waste of embryonic goodness (I put it thus

¹¹⁸ '... the actions which the practice of the virtues requires *could* only be enjoyed if they are seen as noble and virtuous and the agent delights in his achievement of something fine and noble ...' (Burnyeat 1980, 77).

¹¹⁹ τοὺς δὲ πολλοὺς ἀδυνατεῖν πρὸς καλοκαγαθίαν προτρέψασθαι· οὐ γὰρ πεφύκασιν αἰδοῖ πειθαρχεῖν ἀλλὰ φόβῳ, οὐδ' ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν φαύλων διὰ τὸ αἰσχροὺν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὰς τιμωρίας· πάθει γὰρ ζῶντες τὰς οἰκείας ἡδονὰς διώκουσι καὶ δι' ὧν αὐταὶ ἔσονται, φεύγουσι δὲ τὰς ἀντικειμένης λύπας, τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡδέος οὐδ' ἔννοιαν ἔχουσιν, ἄγεστοι ὄντες (EN X 9, 1179b10–16).

¹²⁰ ὅλως τ' οὐ δοκεῖ λόγῳ ὑπεῖκιν τὸ πάθος ἀλλὰ βίᾳ. δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἦθος προϋπάρχειν πῶς οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς, στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ δυσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχροὺν (EN X 9, 1179b28–31).

¹²¹ A craftsman or farmer in Kallipolis, on condition that he does his own job and unquestioningly and unfailingly falls in with instruction from above, is a good citizen, but cannot be a good man, since the *logistikon* in his soul is enfeebled.

¹²² '... legal penalties are necessary to deter wrongdoers, and Aristotle implies that those who need such deterrents are beyond moral reform themselves (EN X 9, 1179b10–18)' (Broadie 1991, 127); and 'Aristotle concludes that none of the moral virtues, strictly speaking, is possible for an individual without the others, since each requires and is required by practical wisdom (1144b30–1145a2). This paradoxical result shows him now a long way ahead of those ordinary notions of human goodness on which he had to rely at the start. The divergence is the price of a theory in which, as for Plato, practical wisdom depends on the substructure of moral virtue, but in which, *contra* Plato, it is every citizen's business to aspire to and exercise practical wisdom. Aristotle's egalitarian conception of practical wisdom carries with it a tightening of the philosophical standard for predicating moral virtues' (Broadie 1991, 258, emphasis added). So much the worse for the common man, miserably bound to fail in his duty? A rum sort of egalitarianism, this.

negatively, since, as we have seen, Aristotle is not one to attempt to make a silk purse from a sow's ear, and the ears are, he thinks, in all too abundant supply). But that really is an odd result. Only the *phronimos* himself could make a good fist of moral education; that is because he sees the particulars, and that vision cannot be conveyed to others. Doubtless all legislation drafted by a true statesman—that is again, by the *phronimos*—will be as good as a book of rules can be—which is to say no more than that these superior educative principles are *katholou*, and so will stand in need of the pedagogic equivalent of *epieikeia* to manage the idiosyncrasies of *this* child's educational needs properly. But since our children are not barely distinguishable ciphers, corrective intervention will be required much more often than not. The fundamental rule for tailoring general educational law to the individual child will, of course, be an appeal to the intentions of the legislator. This legislator will have been a *phronimos*—and, I should have thought, one expert in ethical and political philosophy, if he is competent to overhaul the constitution. And who would be competent to plumb his intentions and perceive what would be best for this child, here and now? Only such another: which rather suggests, in a manner uncomfortably reminiscent of the *Statesman*, that laws are at best superfluous if we are in the vicinity of the ideal Aristotelian statesman. So I think that Aristotle has got himself caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, the ethics are particularist and perceptualist. On the other, architectonic politics cannot down the tools of general legislation, since they are the only instruments for maintenance and repair of the body politic. In fact Aristotle is caught in a double bind. The *Republic* legislates for the good of Kallipolis as a whole by designing a philosophical curriculum reserved for the few;¹²³ but the Aristotelian *phronimos* pretends to legislate for the good of the entire state by catering to the pedagogic requirements of the many through provision of a standardised upbringing.

Or rather, Aristotle vacillates. To finish, let us substantiate my analysis by charting in some detail his oscillation between narrow legislative scope, taking in only the refractory majority and not the élite; and wide scope, taking in the lot by making explicit allowance for Lesbian flexibility in education. 'But it is difficult for one not reared under such

¹²³ Which is not to say that the appetites of those in the economic class can be permitted turbulent expression: despite their limited rationality, these citizens too must somehow be trained up to a modicum of decency. On this partial anticipation of Aristotle's problem see Schofield 2006b, 270–275.

laws to obtain, from childhood on, correct guidance towards virtue; *for the temperate and steadfast life is not pleasant for the many, especially in their youth*. Therefore their nurture and pursuits must be regulated by law: for these practices will not be painful, once they have been habituated to them.¹²⁴ This would seem to be of unambiguously narrow scope. The goal of this legislation, I take it, is to kit out as many as possible of the junior *hoi polloi* for eventual accommodation in a respectable half-way house: they keep to the ways of habitual decency because long familiarity has rendered them painless, not because they have become positively pleasant; but this orderly neutrality is a big improvement on the hardened cases only kept in check by fear of repressive penalties. 'But perhaps it is not enough for people to obtain correct nurture and care when they are young, but rather, since they ought also to practise and be habituated in these courses when grown men, we shall also require laws for this, and indeed generally for the whole of life: for the many are governed by compulsion rather than reason, and by penalties rather than by what is fine.'¹²⁵ It is noteworthy that X 9 intermingles legislative proposals for the moral education of the young and the protection of adult morality. The reason is that the common fabric of character and intellect is coarse: only the better of the meaner sort can be made to internalise a series of restraining orders. Here there is an ambiguity. Obviously the *phronimos* and those approaching *phronêsis* have no need for external supervision; and equally obviously the meanest sort must be constantly under watchful supervision. But is judicial oversight limited to these latter, as one might infer from the end of the passage? Or is the common fabric so cheap that even the better of the meaner sort are in danger of losing their tenancy of the half-way house, and they must be kept constantly up to the mark, so insecure is their internalisation of inhibiting *mores*? If the latter, then presumably in addition to the punishments a system of rewards should be installed, so as to gratify the frail conformity of these little people.

¹²⁴ ἐκ νέου δ' ἀγωγῆς ὁρθῆς τυχεῖν πρὸς ἀρετὴν χαλεπὸν μὴ ὑπὸ τοιούτοις τραφέντα νόμοις· τὸ γὰρ σωφρόνως καὶ καρτερικῶς ζῆν οὐχ ἡδὺ τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἄλλως τε καὶ νέοις, διὸ νόμοις δεῖ τετάχθαι τὴν τροφὴν καὶ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα· οὐκ ἔσται γὰρ λυπηρὰ συνήθη γενόμενα (EN X 9, 1179b31–1180a1).

¹²⁵ οὐχ ἱκανὸν δ' ἴσως νέους ὄντας τροφῆς καὶ ἐπιμελείας τυχεῖν ὁρθῆς, ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ καὶ ἀνδρωθέντας δεῖ ἐπιτηδεύειν αὐτὰ καὶ ἐθίζεσθαι, καὶ περὶ ταῦτα δεοίμεθ' ἂν νόμων, καὶ ὅλως δὴ περὶ πάντα τὸν βίον· οἱ γὰρ πολλοὶ ἀνάγκη μᾶλλον ἢ λόγῳ πειθαρχοῦσι καὶ ζημίαις ἢ τῷ καλῷ (EN X 9, 1180a1–5).

There follows some quite detailed citation of the *Laws*' tripartition: moral exhortation for the complaisant; punishment for the recalcitrant; expulsion of the irredeemable recidivist (1180a5–15, referring to *Laws* IV 718b ff.). But to what effect? 'Some people think ... they also say ...' (οἰονταί τινες ... καί φασι ...): this Platonic *endoxon* is neither endorsed nor rejected.¹²⁶ Why is Aristotle so studiously non-committal? The Athenian's legislative scheme is heterogeneous in form because it covers the whole qualitative spectrum to be found within Magnesia. One guesses that Aristotle cites the *Laws* as far and away the most obvious philosophical precedent for legislation designed to regulate the behaviour of the populace *en masse*; but since the *phronimos* is a law unto himself, Aristotle cannot bring himself to endorse its doctrine unambivalently. On the other hand, he is also not prepared to reject the doctrine explicitly,¹²⁷ because it is not for the political theorist to exempt any citizen, however superlative, from the scope of the legislative process—that would be to run away from the *Laws* only to find oneself in the grip of the *Statesman*. This is the double bind.

'The prescription of a father has neither strength nor compulsion, nor indeed in general does that of an individual, unless he is a king or a similar person; but law does have compulsive power, since it is a pronouncement proceeding from a kind of practical wisdom and intellect. And human beings hate those who oppose their impulses, even if they do so rightly; but the law is not burdensome in its prescription of decency.'¹²⁸ Let us run through the permutations and combinations. If the father is a *phronimos* and his son such as to follow in his footsteps, paternal injunctions will carry weight without any element of compulsion, and there will be few if any impulses to oppose. If the father is decent enough and his son potentially much better than that, the son will also comply with instruction—unless, that is, he has reached the age of discretion and

¹²⁶ Rowe rounds off this section with 'however this may be', which is a supplement, unless it is meant to capture δ' οὖν: Aristotle abruptly returns from his Platonic digression without any comment.

¹²⁷ Just as if the affirmation of the inefficacy of *logoi* to guide the *hoi polloi* into better ways is, among other things, a sideswipe against the explanatory and exhortatory prefaces to the laws in the *Laws*—which seems likely enough—Aristotle does not say so in so many words.

¹²⁸ ἡ μὲν οὖν πατρικὴ πρόσταξις οὐκ ἔχει τὸ ἰσχυρὸν οὐδὲ δὴ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὐδὲ δὴ ὅλως ἡ ἐνὸς ἀνδρός, μὴ βασιλέως ὄντος ἢ τινος τοιούτου· ὁ δὲ νόμος ἀναγκαστικὴν ἔχει δύναμιν, λόγος ὢν ἀπὸ τινος φρονήσεως καὶ νοῦ. καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀνθρώπων ἐχθαίρουσι τοὺς ἐναντιούμενους ταῖς ὁρμαῖς, κἂν ὀρθῶς αὐτὸ δρῶσιν· ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπαχθὴς τάττων τὸ ἐπιεικές (EN X 9, 1180a18–24).

really knows better than the old man. If the father is a *phronimos* and his son a mediocrity, one should credit the wise father with the ability to keep his boy pliable and unresentful. If the father is a scoundrel and the son his superior, we would want him taken into care anyway. So this paternalistic law should usurp the role of the father only when both man and boy are average types, or the son is a natural villain in the making, whatever his father is like. If not quite narrow scope once more, then at least narrower: the wicked boy is no natural son to his wise but hapless father.

What do we make of the provocative assertion that the law ‘is a pronouncement proceeding from a *kind* of practical wisdom and intellect’?¹²⁹ The indefinite here might indicate that Aristotle’s expression is figurative: since there are not enough wise individuals to go round, better the authoritative law in his stead than the powerless father—in which case paternal impotence in the *Nicomachean Ethics* does duty for political corruption in the *Statesman*—the law being the personification of the absent *phronimos*, and better than any human alternative. Or is the indefinite singling out the architectonic form of *phronêsis*: the implication being that even at a remove and both depersonalised and generalised, from behind the legislative veil, the immense authority of the *phronimos* commands the respect of otherwise rebellious youth? I do not see how, in general, to square this very upbeat rating of the charisma of practical wisdom with Aristotle’s rather downbeat judgement on the power of *logos* for good: is attribution of ‘compulsive power’ to an origin in the wise intellect more than wishful thinking? And, in particular, the attribution is incompatible with the combination ‘senior *phronimos* saddled with vastly inferior offspring’: the remote law will not strike the miscreant as awful *because* wise, when he has already turned his back on the domestic wisdom close at hand. So unless there is an argument to be spun out from Aristotelian biology for the proposition that the best must breed true enough to type *never* to produce the worst, the claim that power is an intrinsic attribute of intelligence rings hollow. Compulsion takes over when reasoning gives up, and to suggest otherwise is empty posturing.

If one is so unfortunate as to live in a community whose public provision is markedly poor—most UK school districts, say—one would be best advised to home school (1180a30–32). Back to personal models and particular lessons? Well, no, since preferably the father will have had

¹²⁹ Cf. βιουμένοις κατὰ τινα νοῦν καὶ τάξιν ὁρθήν, ἔχουσιν ἰσχύν (EN X 9, 1180a17–18).

legislative experience himself and, within the little kingdom of the *oikos*, the behests of the benevolent Cyclops are strongly analogous to laws within the *polis*. But in 1180b3–7 we read a transitional passage which complicates the picture yet further. For until this point one imagines that home schooling is a mere *pis aller* for those who live in the wrong place if, in the most favourable circumstances, a rather satisfactory one. Now we learn that private, paternal injunctions and prohibitions can, in fact, prove even more forceful than public legislation, since kinship and a sense of gratitude render children very receptive to the father's instructions (this point can also apply to one's adult *philoi*). The home would continue to enjoy this advantage over the forum even in a sound community—unless, that is, one ventured way beyond the Aristotelian pale into a Kallipolis whose élite is, as it were, one big happy family. Can this passage be reconciled with 1180a18–24? Aristotle seems to vacillate—or even prevaricate.

‘Furthermore, individual courses of instruction are superior to common ones, just as in medicine ... Thus the particular case would seem to be worked out more exactly when the attention is individual: for each person obtains more of what is serviceable.’¹³⁰ Well and good: this is nothing but the long-anticipated application of particularism in action to particularism in education; and were this transference a practicable policy, then its dose of Lesbian flexibility would yield broad scope legislation for the good, since one could tune finely to the needs of the very best pupil. Lest this appear to be the *Statesman* once more, if writ rather small, Aristotle adds a *caveat* to redress the balance in favour of the general: ‘but the doctor, the gymnastic trainer or anyone else who has universal knowledge of what is suitable for all cases or cases of such-and-such a kind could provide the best attention for the individual: for the sciences are said to be, and indeed are, of what is common.’¹³¹ If this is the familiar dialectical pattern for balancing particular and general in ethics, worked through *mutatis mutandis* from action to education, this is how we would predict the next stage: (1) 1104a1–10 / 1180b7–13: the superior merits of particularism in doing justice to the particular case;

¹³⁰ ἔτι δὲ καὶ διαφέρουσιν αἱ καθ’ ἕκαστον παιδεῖαι τῶν κοινῶν, ὥσπερ ἐπ’ ἰατρικῆς ... ἔξακριβοῦσθαι δὴ δόξειεν ἂν μᾶλλον τὸ καθ’ ἕκαστον ἰδίᾳ τῆς ἐπιμελείας γινομένης· μᾶλλον γὰρ τοῦ προσφόρου τυγχάνει ἕκαστος (EN X 9, 1180b7–13).

¹³¹ ἀλλ’ ἐπιμεληθεῖν μὲν (ἂν) ἄριστα καθ’ ἓν καὶ ἰατρὸς καὶ γυμναστής καὶ πᾶς ἄλλος ὁ καθόλου εἰδώς, τί πᾶσιν ἢ τοῖς τοιοισδί (τοῦ κοινοῦ γὰρ αἱ ἐπιστῆμαι λέγονται τε καὶ εἰσίν) (EN X 9, 1180b13–16).

(2) 1141b14–15 / 1180b13–16: practical wisdom in both its active and educational aspects incorporates both general and particular components; finally (3) 1141b21–22, 1143b13–14: one should ideally have both, but sage experience of the particular without general knowledge is preferable to the other way round, to which would correspond in the case of education: ‘nevertheless, perhaps nothing prevents some individual from being well attended even by someone who although lacking in scientific knowledge, has precisely observed on the basis of experience what happens in each case—just as some people seem to be their own best doctors, *albeit of no help to anyone else*’.¹³² But the correspondence is not exact: the concluding simile is a new element. It is axiomatic that experience confronted by novelty is put out of countenance: thus the peerless utility of a systematic understanding whose principles, themselves the fruit of experience, permit the knower to see aright what has never been seen before. So far we have only inferred that the ground safe for the empiric is smaller than the territory over which the knower is expert; and if life in the *polis* holds few surprises, then it is unclear that there is much to choose between them. But if the simile imports the thought that self-regarding singularity is the limiting case of particularity, it thereby imparts a much more pejorative tone to the comparison—and the reason is not far to seek. Life in the *polis* for the better sort vitally includes running the *polis*, given that full-blown *phronêsis* is an attainment reserved for the virtuous ruler (*Politics* III 4, 1277b25–30);¹³³ and although the empiric may do very nicely when drafting ordinary *psêphismata*, who

¹³² οὐ μὴν ἀλλ’ ἐνός τινος οὐδὲν ἴσως κωλύει καλῶς ἐπιμεληθῆναι καὶ ἀνεπιστήμονα ὄντα, τεθραμμένον δ’ ἀκριβῶς τὰ συμβαίνοντα ἐφ’ ἐκάστῳ δι’ ἐμπειρίαν, καθάπερ καὶ ἰατροὶ ἔνιοι δοκοῦσιν ἑαυτῶν ἄριστοι εἶναι, ἐτέρῳ οὐδὲν ἂν δυνάμενοι ἐπαρκεῖσαι (*EN* X 9, 1180b16–20).

¹³³ ‘The science of politics, of which ethics is a part, would seem to have the same relationship to practical wisdom that the science of medicine has to medical skill’ (Devereux 1986, 497) with the footnote: ‘we should note that Aristotle is somewhat hesitant about describing politics as a science (cf. 1094a26 with 1180b31–32); also it is not clear whether he thinks knowledge of politics is a necessary condition of practical wisdom (would he say, for example, that individuals who have not engaged in philosophical reflection about moral and political questions could not be practically wise?)’ (*ibid.* n. 41). The use of the potential optative and the word φαίνεται in 1094a26–28 does not betray any doubt on Aristotle’s part; and if he is quizzical in 1180b31–32, that is only because he is airing his dissatisfaction with current politics as it is conducted and studied. As for Devereux’s question, it all depends on what one means by ‘knowledge of politics’. As the *Politics* proves, in one sense the answer is a resounding ‘yes’; but if ‘knowledge’ be equated with ‘philosophical reflection’, the answer is ‘no’ (although reflection guided by Aristotle would be a big help).

but the *phronimos* could handle either the vagaries of atypical contingencies or—crucially—the articulation of moral insight into general legislation?¹³⁴

‘Nonetheless, perhaps it does seem that someone who wishes to become an expert or a theoretician must advance to the universal, and become as familiar with it as possible: for it has been said that the universal is the object of the sciences. And perhaps someone who wishes to improve people by attending to them, whether they be many or few, must also attempt to become expert in legislation—if it is through laws that we might become good. For making fine arrangements for whoever is put before one is a task for not just anybody, but rather the knower—if it is anyone’s: just as in the case of medicine and the other fields where there is some kind of attention and practical wisdom.’¹³⁵ This is to pull back the generalist punch as far as possible: few other dialectical sequences in the Aristotelian corpus proceed with such tentative diffidence,¹³⁶ or pack the swings and roundabouts so tightly. What is the force of ‘as familiar with it as possible’? Is it just a triviality—con your science hard and thoroughly!—or might it be the case that ὡς ἐνδέχεται has a special and non-trivial application to architectonic *phronêsis*? That is to say that on a number of grounds which have occupied us for most of this investigation, when it comes to the practical *katholou* as opposed to pure theory, there simply isn’t that much of substance to grasp. Granted, the research programme outlined right at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (X 9, 1181b12–23) should eventually supply a wealth of empirical information about constitutional design and so significantly augment the knowledge base of the legislator: but while that will better prepare architectonic *phronêsis* for its confrontation with specific, actual challenges, it will do

¹³⁴ That a collective is wiser than its constituents (*Politics* III 11, 1281a39–b15, 1282a14–23, 15, 1286a29–31) may be a relevant complication: might someone have just enough prudence to be able to share in collective government, while nevertheless having so little that he might benefit from so governing?

¹³⁵ οὐδὲν δ’ ἦττον ἴσως τῷ γε βουλομένῳ τεχνικῶ γενέσθαι καὶ θεωρητικῶ ἐπὶ τὸ καθόλου βαδιστέον εἶναι δόξειεν ἄν, κάκεινο γνωριστέον ὡς ἐνδέχεται· εἰρηται γὰρ ὅτι περὶ τοῦθ’ αἱ ἐπιστήμαι. τάχα δὲ καὶ τῷ βουλομένῳ δι’ ἐπιμελείας βελτίους ποιεῖν, εἴτε πολλοὺς εἴτ’ ὀλίγους, νομοθετικῶ πειρατέον γενέσθαι, εἰ διὰ νόμων ἀγαθοὶ γενοίμεθ’ ἄν. ὄντινα γὰρ οὐκ καὶ τὸν προτεθέντα διαθεῖναι καλῶς οὐκ ἔστι τοῦ τυχόντος, ἀλλ’ εἴπερ τινός, τοῦ εἰδότος, ὥσπερ ἐπ’ ἱατρικῆς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ὧν ἔστιν ἐπιμέλειά τις καὶ φρόνησις (*EN* X 9, 1180b20–28).

¹³⁶ Rowe’s translation (‘still, this presumably does not mean that at any rate if someone does wish to acquire technical knowledge ...’) brings out the qualifications very nicely.

nothing to alter or tone down the implications of particularity. Aristotle cannot afford an unmuted reversion to the clear-cut thesis that the objects of a *pukka* science are universal, for if the emphasis on universality falls too heavily, he will find himself trapped in a dilemma of his own making: *phronêsis* will be stripped of either its epistemological credentials or its particularism—yet without the credentials, it is not wise; without the particularism, it is not practical. One of the jobs of Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* was to dissolve the dilemma by recognising practical intelligence as *sui generis*; but at the end of book X the temptation to represent legislative skill as (almost) a *pukka* science seems to constrain Aristotle from taking full advantage of VI,¹³⁷ despite the final reference to the wise supervision of *phronêsis*, explicitly flagged up as a kind of knowledge. When Aristotle's philosophical perspective broadens to encompass the wise citizen's vision of the communal good, he struggles in a number of respects to think through what general legislation which properly allows for particularisation might be like. Is such a thing feasible, or is the Aristotelian project of an integrally politicised ethics too much to ask for? To ascertain whether the union of ethics and politics is more than *un mariage blanc* would take us far into political theory and *Politics* VII 13—VIII; but at least we should know some of the questions to ask.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Pressures internal to the agenda of VI only exacerbate the problem. As Schofield says, in Book VI 'it is as though his conviction of the wrong-headedness of Plato's indiscriminating epistemological obsession with the universal and the unchangeable impels him to insist—for one form of practical reasoning and judgement after another—that that is simply *not* what *they* are about ... This emphasis has the effect of downplaying more architectonic uses of practical wisdom' (Schofield 2006a, 318).

¹³⁸ Initial inspiration for this paper came from Nicholas Denyer, to whom I also owe thanks for astute criticism; as I also do to Brad Inwood, Roger Crisp, Melissa Lane, Geoffrey Lloyd, Stephen Makin, Mark Migotti, Malcolm Schofield, David Sedley and Shaul Tor. The reactions of participants in the seventh Keeling Colloquium, where a selection of this material was presented, were very helpful—especially those of Peter Adamson and Robert Sharples. I should also like to thank the Sociedade Ibérica de Filosofia Grega, under whose auspices I presented some of this material at their seminário aristotélico in Coimbra. Mary and Robert Bjork did me the favour of casting the sharp editorial eye of the outsider over the piece. Denyer brought Jacques Brunschwig's magisterial study of *epieikeia* to my attention: what I have written is by way of a protracted meditation on his brilliant work, and I dedicate the results, for what they are worth, to him.

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CHAPTER TWO

PARTICULAR VIRTUES IN THE *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS* OF ARISTOTLE

CARLO NATALI

1. *Knowing the universal vs. knowing the particular*

In Aristotle the universal is the object of art, philosophy and science. Some famous passages in his works say it very clearly. In the *Poetics* 9, 1451b5–7, he tells us that poetry is more philosophical and more important (*philosophôteron kai spoudaioteron*) than history, because poetry speaks for the most part about the universal whereas history is about particular events. In the same vein, at the beginning of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle says that *empeiria* is about particulars, and only when we have a single universal judgement about similar facts (*mia hupolêpsis peri tôn homoiôn*) (981a5–7) do we have art. Later, he adds that *sophia* is about the universal, and when we know the universal we know *in a way* (*pôs*) everything (982a21–23). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well, when speaking about *epistêmê*, Aristotle says what is typical of *epistêmê* is to have an account of the universal and the necessary (*peri tôn katholou hupolêpsis kai tôn ex anankês ontôn*, 1140b31–32).

On the other hand in the *Metaphysics* itself Aristotle says that in the field of acting the knowledge of particulars is more important than the mere knowledge of the universal:

It seems that for practical purposes experience is not inferior to art; indeed we see men of experience succeeding more than those who have theory without experience. This is because experience is about particulars, and art is about universals, but actions and events are all concerned with particulars (...). Hence, if a physician has theory (*logos*) without experience, and knows the universal, but ignores the particular falling under it (*to d'en toutôi kath'hekston*), he will often get the therapy wrong; because what is to be treated is above all the particular. (981a12–24)

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* he repeats that “praxis has to do with particulars” (*hê de praxis peri ta kath’hekasta*, 1141b16), and that in practical matters to have mere *empeiria* is better than to know only the universal:

This is also why from time to time, in other matters as well, people who lack universal knowledge, i.e. men of experience, are more effective than others who have it. For instance if a man knows that light meat is easily digested and wholesome, but does not know what kinds of meat are light, he will not produce health; whereas a man who merely knows that chicken meat is light and healthy will be more effective. (1141b16–21)

But the conclusion he draws from this distinction is that practical wisdom should possess both the universal and the particular facts:

practical wisdom is not *only* about universals, it is necessary to know the particulars as well, since it is concerned with action and action has to do with particulars (...) practical wisdom has to do with action, so one must know both, or above all particular facts. (1141b14–16 + 21–22; my emphasis).

Gadamer has described the lasting importance of Aristotle’s conception of *phronêsis* starting from this element. According to him, whereas in Plato ethics is about applying a rule to a given case, doing the same as a technician who applies the universal rules of his art, e.g. architecture, to the production of an individual object, Aristotle’s conception of practical wisdom gives much more importance to particulars: there should be a dialogue between universal and particular, and acting is a matter of interpretation, not of applying an universal rule to a given case (Gadamer 1990, 317–329).

Whatever the merits of Gadamer’s interpretation of practical wisdom, one shortcoming of his position is to identify *phronêsis* and practical philosophy. He thinks that the condition of validity of practical reasoning described in the *NE* apply to the *NE* itself. Aristotle’s ethics is practical reasoning, according to him, and not a dry and general reflection about universal moral concepts.

I cannot completely agree on this point. Aristotle knows very well the difference between acting in practice and theorizing about virtuous action, and discusses this problem in a passage in *NE* II:

Since the present study, unlike others, is not about mere theory, for we are not investigating what virtue is in order to know it, but in order to become good, for the reason that otherwise our enquiry will be of no use, it is necessary to enquire about things connected with action, and how to act; as we already said before, actions determine also the quality of our habits (...) Let us agree on the fact that it is better if the entire discourse

about acting is made in outline only and without exactness, as we said at the beginning: one can expect discourses corresponding to their subject matter, and matters connected with action and things useful have nothing fixed, any more than things relative to health. If this applies to universal propositions, discourses about particular cases will have even less precision. The reason is that they are under no art or any set of rules, but the agents themselves must consider what applies to the present circumstance (*ta pros ton kairon*), just as happens in medicine and the art of navigation. But, even if the present discourse presents such limitations, we must do our best to be of some use. (1103b26–1104a11)

Here we have some interesting points: Aristotle's *NE* is a *pragmateia*, a treatise, and not a moral action, but it has an end partly similar to the end of moral action: *ôphelein*, to be useful. In order to be useful and help the listeners to become good, Aristotle wants to examine the conditions of human acting. He warns us, as he already did at the beginning of *NE* I, that his *logos* will be valid only 'for the most part' and will not be precise, as medical *logoi* mostly are. This applies to universal *logoi*, and much more to *logoi* about the particular cases, because there will be even less precision. The agent should look to the context and the given circumstances and not only apply a particular technical rule or advice. This being the situation, nevertheless the *NE* will try to be of some use to his public.

The hierarchy described by Aristotle here is a little strange: we would expect that in a irregular world the particular *logoi* would be more precise than the universal ones. But Aristotle says the contrary. I think he has in mind, as example of *kath' hekasta logoi*, some particular practical rules, such as the five golden rules to win a battle quoted by Austin (Austin 1961, 193–194). One cannot be sure that a particular piece of advice or example applies to a given situation. But a more general *logos* can be more precise and useful. How can it be so?

In the *NE* Aristotle wants to provide some universal premises useful for the practical agent. If the wise should know both the universal premise and the particular ones, e.g. that all light food is healthy and that this is a light food, in a general treatise on the human good, like the *NE*, the philosopher can try to give an argument for the universal premise. But an universal is not any generalisation whatsoever. Only premises that express the nature of the thing, *ti estin*, are real Aristotelian universals.¹

¹ Being the indication of the formal cause, the universal states the reason why a thing is what it is and why it has its fundamental characteristics, cf. *A. Po.* 85a20–31, b3–15, 85b23–86a3. As Aubenque aptly says: "L'universel est donc pour Aristote tout le contraire d'un résumé ou d'une somme de l'expérience" (Aubenque 1962, 209–210).

In the practical field the job of the philosopher seems to be to articulate in a clear and logical way some knowledge that the practical agent already possesses in a way still unclear, and perhaps not with the required degree of universality. In the *NE* Aristotle remarks:

It is necessary that to listen to lectures about what is fine and right and in general about politics one must have been well trained in his habits; for the starting point is *to hoti*, and if this is evident in a sufficient way, there will be no need for the reason why. And such a student either will already have practical principles or might learn them easily. (1095b4–8)

Here the good pupil in the ethical lecture must already have some knowledge of the *hoti*, and the philosopher completes it with a rational foundation. If the *archê* is the definition of happiness as “active exercise of the capacities in the soul, according to its virtue” (1098a16), the moral agent already knows it in a way, or is near to understanding it, and listening to the lectures of the philosopher helps him to know better what he already knows.² As Aristotle puts it in the *EE*:

It would be best if everybody clearly agrees with what we say here, but, failing that, they should all agree in some way. They will do that after a transformation, for everyone has some contribution of his own to the truth, and from such contributions we can make a demonstration: in fact starting from true propositions expressed in an unclear way we can attain clarity, if we transform at every stage what people usually express in a confused way into more perspicuous assertions (1216b30–33).

2. Parts of the soul, parts of virtue

The definition of happiness is the central point of the *NE*, on which all the *pragmateia* depends. In *NE* chapter I 13 Aristotle repeats this definition, and begins a very wide section of the work, starting from here and going to the end of *NE* IV, dedicated to the notion of *aretê*. All commentators agree that here a new section of *NE* begins (Maugirus 1842, 55; Grant 1874, I 470; Ramsauer 1879, 68; Stewart 1892, I 157; Broadie-Rowe 2002, 293).

² There is a huge discussion about what *hoti* means in this passage. Most commentators, from Aspasius to Bodeüs, think that *hoti* here refers to the accepted moral values, practical rules or what to do here and now (Maugirus 1842, 21); on contrary Stewart and Burnet think that *hoti* here refers to the definition of happiness, that is the *oikeia archê* of morals. Also Kullmann and Irwin think that Aristotle means that in ethics we should know what happiness is and what are its main defining characteristics, without searching into why it has such characteristics (Aspasius 1889, 9,26–10,5; Bodeüs 2004, 139; Stewart 1892, I, 55; Burnet 1900, 17–18; Kullmann 1974, 226–227; Irwin 1999, 76). A later

This section is grounded on the results of the preceding section of the work, which was dedicated to establishing that happiness is the supreme human good, and what is its nature.

At the beginning of *NE* I 13 Aristotle repeats the definition established before:

Since happiness is a certain sort of activity of soul in accordance with complete virtue, we must examine virtue; for that will perhaps enable us to understand better what happiness is. (1102a5–7)

He adds some remarks that remind us of the beginning of *NE* I: the politicians should be interested in this problem, as the examples of Sparta and Crete show (1102a9–12); the present research is typical of political science and proceeds following the intention stated at the beginning of the work (*tês politikês estin hê skepsis hautê*, 1102a12–23; the reference is to 1094b7–11). A resume of the main points of *NE* I 1–7 follows: we look for the human good, and for the specifically human virtue, which is not the virtue of the body, but the virtue of the soul (1102a13–18). Again we have a limitation of the search for the *dioti*:

Now if it is so, clearly the political expert should know something about psychology, just as the physician specialising in ophthalmology must know something about the entire body, and even more, because politics is more important and better than medicine (...) so, the politician as well must study the soul, but should do so in relation to the present questions and up to the limits useful for the present research. To look for further explanation (*epi pleion exakriboun*) would surely be more laborious than is necessary for our purpose. (1102a18–27)

In ethics we do not need to bother with problems proper to other sciences, but it is enough to know some distinctions in their main outlines. For instance it is important, in order to know what human virtue is, to know that the soul is divided into several parts, but we do not need to go into this point more deeply:

It does not matter for present purposes whether these two parts are really distinct as the parts of the body are, and like everything that is composed of parts, or whether they are distinguishable in thought (*logôî*) but undistinguishable in fact, like the convex and the concave in the case of a curved surface. (1102a28–32)

passage seems to support Kullmann's interpretation: "Nor again in all matters must we expect to know the cause in the same way, but in some cases it will suffice if *to hoti* is established in a satisfactory way, as is the case when speaking about principles: *to hoti* is the first thing and the principle" (1098a34–b2).

Some elementary observation will suffice, above all the experience of conflicts internal to our soul, that everybody experiences sooner or later (1102b13–1103a3). From the experience of conflicts Aristotle derives the notion of two parts of the soul, a rational one and a desiring one. This one has some rational capacity, in particular it is able to listen to the rational part and obey it. Its relationship to the rational part is similar to the relationship between son and father. The father must give orders, the son is able to understand and obey, or to resist and oppose (1102b15–18, 23–33).

The qualification of the desiring part as able to understand reasoning clarifies that we are speaking here about specifically human soul; only the vegetative soul is common to every living being, the desiderative part in man is different from the similar part of the soul in other animals because it can listen to reason, and other animals' souls cannot do that.

From the distinction of parts of the soul Aristotle derives the distinction of kinds of virtue. To be accurate, we should pass from the idea of parts of the soul to the idea of the *ergon*, specific function, of each part, and from this to the idea of the perfect functioning, *aretê*, of those parts. But here Aristotle follows the short path, and concludes:

The division of virtues is made according to this difference. For some virtues are called intellectual and others moral: intellectual accomplishment, understanding and wisdom are virtues of thought, generosity and temperance virtues of character. For when we speak of someone's character we do not say that he is wise or good, but that he is gentle or temperate. And yet, we praise the wise person too for his state and the states that are praiseworthy are the ones we call virtues. (1103a3–10)³

Here we have a distinction, *diaphora*. The distinction is related to *logos*, and expresses the difference between 'possessing *logos*' and 'obeying *logos*'. The virtue of human soul depends on a relationship not completely clarified at this point in the *NE*. Anyway, the virtues of the soul being qualities of a living being, it is not strange to divide them into different species. The idea that the virtues of the two main parts of the soul are different *eidê* is clearly expressed in *EE* (1220a4); in the *NE* it is never said what kind of relationship there is between them.

³ This is only a preliminary distinction, in fact the relationship between the two parts of the soul is much more complicated, as *NE* VI shows. The virtues of the desiring part of the soul involve one of the intellectual virtues, practical wisdom (Joachim 1955, 69–70; Irwin 1999, 192).

One could ask, however, why Aristotle thinks that in order to know better what happiness is we must inquire about virtue, *aretê*. The commentators think that Aristotle wants to clarify the terms of the definition of happiness: *psuchês energeia kat' aretên* (Brewer 1836, 43; Grant 1874, I 417; Joachim 1955, 61; Gauthier 1970, II 89; Irwin 1999, 191). But the only term discussed here is *aretê*, which is, after all, a common-language word. On the contrary *energeia*, an Aristotelian expression never used before him, and a term that would certainly need clarification, is completely overlooked. Besides, in a definition the terms composing the *definiens* should be better known than the *definiendum*, and *energeia* or *aretê* should be better known than *anthrôpinon agathon* and *eudaimonia*.

I think that here we do not have a linguistic clarification of the terms used in the definition; rather, Aristotle wants to introduce further distinctions about an object, *psuchês aretê*, which till now has been described in a too general way.⁴ There are two species of virtue of the soul, both are excellences of the specifically human soul, and they have different definitions. In the following book Aristotle will give us the definition of the virtue of the desiring part of the soul, i.e. ethical virtue. On the contrary, a general definition of the virtue of rational soul is absent from the books of the *NE* as we now have it, and in *NE VI* we will find only the definitions of the two species of intellectual virtue, *sophia* and *phronêsis* but not the general one (*NE VI* 1140b20–21 and 1141a18–20).⁵ I do not know if the section about the general definition of intellectual virtue has been lost, or if it has been never written by Aristotle.

Anyway, the distinction of two species of virtue of the soul, that are habits, *hexeis* (1103a9) and are connected with reason, disambiguates the preceding definition of happiness and makes it less obscure and more practical. To be happy will now mean to be active with the two parts of human soul, according to their respective virtues. An important point is made at the end of *NE I* 13. Aristotle says not only that moral qualities such as justice and courage are virtues, but also that intellectual qualities such as wisdom, understanding and practical wisdom count as *aretai*. The argument for this is taken from the common language and the *paideia*⁶ of educated people:

⁴ I follow here a suggestion by Gail Fine; see also (Zingano 2008, 75).

⁵ However, at 1139b12–13 he comes very close to a general definition: “the function of each part is truth, so the virtues of each part will be the states that enable them to grasp truth to the highest degree”.

⁶ On *paideia* see *NE*, 1094b28–1095a2; *De part. an.* I 1, 639a1–15.

the states (*hexeis*) that are praiseworthy (*tas epainetas*) are the ones we call virtues (1103a9–10).

Here Aristotle anticipates something he will discuss more fully later; that *aretê* is an *hexis* will be demonstrated in *NE* II 4. That *aretê* is something praiseworthy, however, has been already said in *NE* I 12:

Praise (*epainos*) is given to virtue, since it makes us do fine actions (1101b31–32).

In fact happiness, being superior to virtue as the whole is superior to its component parts, is to be honoured; on the contrary, virtue is to be praised. So, a praiseworthy habitual state of the soul is a virtue. In *NE* 1 to be praiseworthy seems to be an unimportant aspect of virtue, but in *NE* II it will become much more relevant.

3. *The definition of moral virtue in general*

The discussion in *NE* II starts with an explicit reference to the conclusion of book I: “Virtue being of two kinds, then, one intellectual and the other moral ...” (1103a14), but goes on immediately to discuss an apparently less important problem, how to acquire both kinds of virtue.

The acquisition of intellectual virtues is described very briefly: they derive from teaching (*didaskalia*) and need time and experience (1103a15–17). The moral virtues instead derive from habituation, from which they derive their name, with the change of the quantity of a vowel, *ethos* → *êthikê*. The same order of arguments is to be found in the *EE*, where Aristotle distinguishes two questions about the good life, what it is and how it can be acquired (*en tini to eu zên kai pôs ktêton*, 1214a15), but discusses the second question first (1214a15–30). Commentators object that it would be better and more natural to say first what is moral virtue and afterwards how to acquire it (Stewart 1892, I 187). But Aristotle justifies his procedure at the beginning of *NE* II 2, saying:

Since the present study, unlike others, is not about mere theory, for we are not investigating what virtue is in order to know it, but in order to become good, for the reason that otherwise our enquiry will be of no use, it is necessary to enquire into things connected with action, and how to act. (1103b26–29)

We already know that virtue is a quality (1103b22). To find the definition of moral virtue in general Aristotle follows a process by elimination (Grant 1874, I 495; Irwin 1999, 196). He says:

Since things arising in the soul fall into three kinds, i.e. passions, faculties and states, virtue must be one of these. (1105b19–21)

Such a procedure can be valid only if the listing of “things arising in the soul” is complete, and someone could object that there are many other things arising in the soul, such as thoughts, choices, and so on. But we need to introduce some restriction in the meaning of ‘soul’ here. As the Anonymous commentator already said in antiquity, here “soul” means *desiring* soul, that listens to reason and can obey it (Anonymous 1892, 130,18). Besides, Magirus observes that we should take as differences those typical of the genus of the thing defined. Since virtue is in the category of quality, we should divide it according to the main species of quality.⁷ Magirus refers, I think, to a passage in the *Posterior Analytics*, where Aristotle says:

After that, getting what the kind is, e.g. whether it is a quality or a quantity, consider the proper affections [of the *definiendum*] through the first common terms. (96b19–21)

This passage is very difficult and the interpretation proposed here is controversial (Ross 1949, 658; Barnes 1994, 242–243; Pellegrin 2005, 414; Charles 2000, 230–232; Mignucci 2007, 288–289). I think it means that, when dealing with a complex entity, we should divide it according to its primary species. In fact, in *NE* II 4 we find a reference to three of the four main kinds of quality distinguished in *Categ.* 8, the fourth species being external shape and hence not relevant for the problem discussed here.

If we take both aspects of the analysis together, i.e. having as object the desiring part of the soul and using the main distinctions of the category of quality, as Grant and others explain, Aristotle’s procedure seems to be sound (Grant 1874, I 496; Burnet 1900, 88; Joachim 1955, 81–82; Dirlmeier 1956, 308; Broadie and Rowe 2002, 301; *contra* Gauthier 1970, II 132). Aristotle refers specifically to passions, abilities and habitual states of the desiring soul, and not in general to other human passions, abilities and habitual states such as sweetness, whiteness, quickness, health, science or good physical shape:

By passions I mean desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendliness, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity; and generally states connected to, and

⁷ (Magirus 1842, 74): “*praecipiant autem Dialectici genus quarendum esse et sumendum ex eodem praedicamento in quo est ipsum definitum. Cum vero virtus sit in praedicamento qualitatis, ideoque Aristoteles quoque per enumeratione specierum qualitatis genus ejus vero investigat*”.

originating, pleasure and pain; capacities are the faculties by which we can be said to be susceptible of having those emotions, for instance of being capable of anger, pain and pity; habitual states are the formed states of character by which we are well or ill disposed toward these emotions. (1105b21–28)

In sum, the argument is:

- Since virtue is a quality of the desiring part of human soul
 - and since quality is divided into *pathê*, *dunamis* and *êthê*,
-
- virtue will be a *pathos*, a *dunamis* or an *ethos* of the human soul

Now Aristotle must eliminate two of the three differences. He will demonstrate his thesis, that moral virtue is a *hexis*, an habitual state of the soul. The arguments for eliminating *pathê* and *dunamis* use premises established in what precedes, especially in book I. The text is somewhat repetitive, since we have the same reasons for eliminating passion and capacity. We can summarise Aristotle's reasoning in the following way:

1. Neither passions nor capacities are qualities according to which we are called good or bad; but moral virtue is a quality according to which we are called good; hence moral virtue is not a passion or a capacity (1105b28–31 and 1106a7–8).
2. Neither passions nor capacities are qualities according to which we are praised or blamed; but moral virtue is a quality according to which we are praised; hence moral virtue is not a passion or a capacity (1105b31–1106a2 and 1106a8–9).

The characteristics of 'being called good' and 'being praised' in book I were connected to the definition of happiness; hence the definition of happiness governs the elimination process here. Two arguments specifically against *pathos* follow.

3. Since passions are not connected with choice, and moral virtue is connected with choice (1105a31–32), virtues are not passions (1106a2–4); this argument uses principles established in *NE* II 3.
4. Since we say we are moved by passions, and we do not say we are moved by moral virtue, but we say we are in some habitual state, moral virtue are not passions; here the reference is to common language.

Against capacities we have only one specific argument. It is the following.

- 3' We have capacities by nature; but moral virtues are in us not by nature, but by habituation; hence moral virtues are not capacities (1106a9–10); this argument uses principles established in *NE* II 1.

Most of those arguments are grounded on what has been said in *NE* I and in *NE* II 1–3; only once does Aristotle refer to what is commonly said and to *endoxa*. The argument in *NE* I–II appears to be a well connected and continuous one, and not a series of independent dialectical reasonings starting from common opinion.

The conclusion can be resumed in the following way:

- Since virtue is a *pathos*, a *dunamis* or an *ethos*
 - and it cannot be *pathos*, or a *dunamis*,
-
- virtue will be an *ethos* of the human soul.

We have found the *genus* of moral virtue, which is an habitual state. Now we must find its *eidos*, i.e. we must find which kind of habitual state moral virtue is. The chapter discussing it, *NE* II 5, is one of the most known and analysed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. I will not discuss it again but I would like to quote its conclusion, which is the general definition of moral virtue:

Virtue then is a state concerned with choice, consisting in a mean relative to us, a state determined⁸ by reason and in the way in which the wise man would determine it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency (1106b36–1107a3).

In the definition most elements derive from which has been said in the preceding chapters. Some new ideas, such as the reference to the *phronimos*, are never explicitly quoted in the preceding pages (Ramsauer 1879, 109); but Aristotle has already said that moral virtue must be in accord with correct reason (1103b31–32).⁹ Here again we follow the rule laid down in the *Posterior Analytics* about how to find the elements of

⁸ I read here *horismenê* and not *horismenêi*, with Susemihl and against Bywater, Gauthier and others.

⁹ Terry Irwin has rightly indicated the importance of this passage in preparing for the definition in *NE* II 6.

a definition. It says that every predicate in the definition is such that it could be applied to something else, but all taken together could apply only to moral virtue:

Such things [= predicates] must be taken up to the first point at which each of them will belong also to other subjects, but, taken all together, they will not belong to any other subject. (96a32–34).

In fact *hexis* could be said also of a vice; choices could be wrong, with regard both to the end and to the means; and the right mean exists also for non-moral qualities like health or strength; the reference to the *phronimos* could apply also to the intellectual virtues. But the complex made up of all those qualities can be referred only to moral virtue.

Aristotle says that the definition of moral virtue is in outline, *tupôi* (1114b26–27). Some scholars think that this means that the definition is not precise or is valid only ‘for the most part’. But it does not: the definition of moral virtue applies to all the particular cases and to every particular virtue. The definition is *tupôi* because it does not give us the differences that constitute the particular moral virtues, but says only what applies to all of them.

A passage from the *Politics* gives an appropriate example:

Sailors are dissimilar in their capacities: one is a rover, another is a pilot (...) it is clear that the most precise (*akribestatos*) account of their virtue will be that peculiar (*idios*) to each (*hekastou*) sort individually, but a common account (*koinos tis*) will in a similar way fit all (*epharmosei pasin*). (1276b21–26)

This passage shows that Aristotle uses *tupôi* and *akribês* in the sense of ‘more general’ and ‘more specific’: a definition is *tupôi* when it applies in general to all kinds without specifying the differences, and it is *akribês* when it adds to the general characters the specific features for each kind. It is a concept of accuracy and precision very different from ours, and connected to the practical aim of the *NE*.

In fact, from the practical point of view we have only partial progress with this definition. To be happy now means to be active with both parts of the human soul, and, relatively to the action of the desiring part of the mind, to be active in a way that avoids opposite types of malfunctioning, or vices: excess or defect in desiring, in choice and in action. But we still do not exactly know what to do in order to be happy, *eudaimones*.

One could think that the idea is that the right mean relative to us (*to meson pros hemas*) has to be understood in a relativistic way: what is virtuous for *x* is a vice for *y*. On the contrary Aristotle holds that there

is a criterion for the right mean, the *phronimos*. The right mean relative to John Doe in a given situation is what a *phronimos* would do if he were in his shoes. The very idea of a variable *meson* implies the idea of a point that exists objectively in every situation, even if it is difficult to find it. This is why it is necessary to have the sharp eye of the *phronimos*, that can see where is the boundary between excess, defect and right measure (*tôi men spoudaiôi to kat' alêtheian einai ... ho spoudaios hekasta krinei orthôs kai en ekastois talêthes autôi phainetai*, 1113a24–25 and 30–31).

Such a general definition of moral virtue needs a further specification to be completely clear and practicable.

4. The definition of particular virtues

Aristotle calls the particular virtues *kath' hekasta*. Here the term has a slightly different meaning from the occurrence in 1113a30, when he was speaking about the judgement of the *phronimos*. Then *kath' hekasta* was used to refer to the single case, now instead it designates a more restricted generalisation (Anagnostopoulos 1994, 174 and 177; Taylor 2006, 113). In order to come closer to actual *praxis* Aristotle feels the need to give a more detailed account of the moral virtues:

We must not only state it in general (*katholou*), we should also apply it to the particular cases (*kath' hekasta*). For among discourses concerning actions, the more general ones are more empty (*kenôteroi*), the particular ones are truer (*alêthinôteroi*), since actions are about particular cases, and we must agree on these. Let us, then, take these from the following chart. (1107a28–33; the schema here alluded to, is lost)

Some think that the general definition of moral virtues does not yet identify the practical good (Anagnostopoulos 1994, 166); in fact it does, but only in a too general and imprecise way, not sufficient for the needs of *praxis*.

In *NE* II we find, immediately after the general definition of moral virtue, a schematic list of particular moral virtues (II 7).¹⁰ Some particular questions follow at the end of the book (II 8–9). In the following book

¹⁰ The suggestion that this first list is interpolated (Monro 1876) was made because in the XIXth century scholars did not think that the *EE* was a genuine Aristotelian work, and the list in *NE* II 7 has some similarities to the list in *EE* II 3. If we admit, as is common now, that *EE* is by Aristotle, the observation loses its strength.

Aristotle passes to a long discussion about voluntary and involuntary action. After concluding it Aristotle returns to the discussion of particular virtues, saying:

We have discussed in common (*koinêi*) the virtues and their genus in outline (*tupôi*); we said that they are means and that they are states; certain actions produce them and they cause us to do these same actions in accord with the virtues themselves, in the way correct reason prescribes. They are up to us and voluntary (*eph' hêmin kai hekousioi*). Let us now take up the virtues again and discuss them one by one (*peri hekastês*). Let us say what they are (*tines*), what sort of things they are concerned with (*peri poia*) and how (*kai pôs*). It will be clear at the same time how many of them there are. (1114b26–29 + 1115a4–5)¹¹

A little later he repeats the same idea:

We will acquire a better knowledge of the aspects of character (*ta peri to êthos*) examining them one by one (*kath' hekaston*); and if we see that in each case the virtue is a mean, we will be more convinced that all virtues are means. (1127a15–18)

The first list of particular virtues in chapter II 7, is now, in chapter III 5(8), said to be *tupôi*, in outline. The reason is that there just one aspect of the particular virtues was discussed, their being a right mean in different contexts. But there are other characteristics of those virtues that need examination, in order to have a definition for them. Some commentators think that the list of virtues is open, but this is contradicted by Aristotle himself, when he says “It will be clear at the same time how many of them there are” (1115a5). The list is closed, as is the list of the causes in *Metaphysics* Alpha (*pace* Anagnostopoulos 1994, 186). At this point Aristotle takes up both the general definition of moral virtue and the result of the discussion of the voluntary and involuntary, and applies it to particular virtues.

This section of *NE* has not been widely discussed by critics; today Aristotle's readers are interested in his general notion of moral virtue, and some particular virtues like courage have also been analysed at some length; but there are few general discussions of the section III 5(8)—IV 9(15). To start a general examination of the section, I think it would be useful to tackle three main problems:

- what is the relationship between the general definition of moral virtue and the examination of particular virtues?

¹¹ I relocate the passage 1114b30–1115a3 immediately before 1114b26, as Susemihl does.

- how was the list of particular virtues constituted and whence does Aristotle derive it? Why does he include some virtues, and exclude others, that were considered virtues by Plato or Xenophon?
- why we do have two discussions of virtue, one before the examination of the voluntary and involuntary and the other after it?

Let us start from the last question. The first list, in *NE* II 7 has only the function of illustrating the thesis that for each virtue there are two opposed vices and, by consequence, each particular virtue is a right mean. Aristotle lists nine virtues and two quasi-virtues and indicates an excess and a defect relative to each one. At the end there is an indication that a fuller discussion will follow (1108b7–10). As we have already seen, starting to discuss the particular virtues again, Aristotle explicitly refers to a preceding discussion, at lines 1114b26–27. The duplication is not by chance, but it was planned by Aristotle. In 1108b7–10 there is also a hint of the virtue of justice, quoted in I 13, but never referred to again in book II or the beginning of book III. Aristotle says:

There will be an opportunity to speak about those virtues later. About justice, since it is not said in a single sense, after the other virtues we shall divide it and say how each type is a right mean. And likewise with the virtues of reasoning too. (1108b7–10)

I will return to this passage. For the moment I would like to observe that in *NE* III–IV the point is not simply that each particular virtue is a form of right mean. Rather, Aristotle wants to show that they have all the traits present in the general definition and also that the actions derived from them are voluntary, according to the definition given in *NE* III 1–5(7). We can say that the discussion in *NE* III–IV is wider and more articulated than the discussion in *NE* II 7. There is a difference that explains the repetition of the list of particular virtues; however the suspicion of an imperfect organisation of the exposition remains. Aristotle could have discussed the voluntary and involuntary immediately after the definition of moral virtue in general, and only afterwards gone on with the application of both criteria to particular virtues. This is the first suspicion of a bad organisation of the material since the beginning of the *NE*.

But in the *EE* as well, we find the same procedure. After establishing that moral virtue is about the right mean (1220b34–35), Aristotle gives us a list of the single virtues (1220b36–1221a12), in which an intellectual virtue, practical wisdom, is also included (1221a12 and 36–38). Afterwards, a first short discussion of each virtue follows, in which Aristotle

shows that in each case there are two opposed vices; he does not refer to the right mean any more, but the concept is understood here (1221a13–b26). In *EE* book III he discusses the single virtues again in detail. There is no doubt that the discussion about single virtues is in the order Aristotle wanted it to be.

Let us go back to the passage 1108b7–10, already quoted. Many scholars consider it wholly or in part spurious. Ramsauer and Gauthier do not accept the whole section because they think that it implies that both of the two forms of justice, and the intellectual virtues, are instances of the right mean. Since they think that one of the main forms of justice, the general one, and all the intellectual virtues are not kinds of right mean, in their opinion the passage has been interpolated (Ramsauer 1879, 120; Gauthier 1970, II 161). On the contrary, Grant and many others condemn just the section about the intellectual virtues, “And likewise with the virtues of reasoning (*logikai*) too” because, they say, the term *logikai* is not an Aristotelian term, and intellectual virtues are not kinds of right mean (Grant 1874, I 109; Burnet 1900, 102; Rackham 1934, 105; Bodeüs 2004, 125).

Now, concerning justice, I do not agree that general justice is not connected to the idea of the right mean, as Ramsauer and Gauthier think. Being the sum of all the other moral virtues in relation to other people, if each other moral virtue is a kind of right mean, there is a way in which it could be considered a kind of right mean itself (cf. Bodeüs 2004, 125).

As for the intellectual virtues, some scholars think there is another way to understand the text, and I agree with them. When Aristotle says “likewise” (*homoiôs de*) (1108b10) most critics refer it to what immediately precedes “say how each of them is a right mean” (*eroumen pôs mesotetês eisin*) (1108b9–10), but if we look at the particles we could connect *homoiôs de* to *men* in line 1108b7, when Aristotle says “There will be an opportunity to speak about those virtues later” (*alla peri men toutôn allothi kairos estai*). Aristotle will not be saying that later he will show that intellectual virtues are forms of right mean, but he is only saying that the right moment for speaking about it will arrive later (the same opinion in Aspasius 1889, 55, l. 27, Dirlmeier 1956, 316, Taylor 2006, 122).

Interpreted in this way, the last phrase of book II indicates what, according to Aristotle, should follow the discussion of particular virtues in book IV. First of all, a discussion of justice, in which Aristotle will discuss the main forms of it and show that it conforms to the general definition of moral virtue. After that, an examination of the intellectual virtues, which were not referred to any more after the first lines of book II. The person who placed the two common books, *NE* V–VI (= *EE* IV–V)

after *NE* IV, either Aristotle himself, or some disciple, or a later editor, no doubt followed the indication given here about what should follow. I do not think that book *NE* V and VI were originally written in connection with *NE* I–IV and I suspect that they were placed after *NE* IV later, but I cannot pursue this issue here, and it will be matter for another paper.

5. Where does the Aristotelian list of moral virtues come from?

Nobody, as far as I know, has discussed the origin of Aristotle's list of moral virtues; some have remarked that Aristotle does not follow Plato's list of four main virtues (*sophia*, *andreia*, *sôphrosunê*, *dikaiosunê*, cf. *Republic* 427e),¹² and that he seems to have taken up popular opinions (Grant 1874, I 509; Gauthier 1970, II 154). As we already said, Aristotle wants to give us an exhaustive list of moral virtues, but he seems to have excluded some virtues commonly admitted at his time, such as *hosiotês*.

Aristotle's choices become more clear if we look at the Pseudo-Platonic *Definitions*, where much material from Academic discussions is collected. Here at 411d we find a general definition of moral virtue, followed, in lines 411d–413c by a list of particular virtues, each with its definition. Some incongruous elements intrude in the section, but in general we have here a wide list of moral excellencies: *phronêsis*, *dikaio-sunê*, *sôphrosunê*, *andreia*, *enkrateia*, *autarkeia*, *epieikeia*, *karteria*, *tharsos*, *alupia*, *philoponia*, *aidôs*, *eleutheria*, *eleutheriotês*, *prâiotes*, *kosmiotês*, [*eudaimonia*], *megaloprepeia*, *anchinoia*, *chrestotês*, *kalokagathia*, *megalopsuchia*, *philanthropia*, *eusebeia*, [*agathon*], *aphobia*, *apatheia*, (practical wisdom, justice, temperance, courage, self-restraint, self-sufficiency, fairness, fortitude, confidence, painlessness, industriousness, modesty, freedom, generosity, even temper, decorum, [happiness or success], magnificence, quick wit, honesty, moral perfection, pride, love of humanity, piety, [good], fearlessness, absence of passion). A little later we find *deinotês*, *philia*, (cleverness, friendship) and *alêtheia* (veracity).

It is possible to find nearly all these terms in *NE* or *EE*. Some are in the list of moral virtues in *NE* II 7: *dikaiosunê*, *sôphrosunê*, *andreia*, *eleutheriotês*, *prâiotes*, *megaloprepeia*, *megalopsuchia*, *philia*, *alêtheia*, and

¹² Other partial lists are in *Protagoras* (329c, 332a, 349b: *dikaiosunê*, *sôphrosunê*, *hosiotês*, *sophia*, *andreia*) and in *Cratylus* (411a–414b: *phronêsis*, *gnômê*, *sôphrosunê*, *sophia*, *dikaiosunê*, *andreia*).

aidôs, (justice, temperance, courage, generosity, even temper, magnificence, pride, friendship, veracity, modesty); ten out of twelve Aristotelian virtues are from the Pseudo-Platonic *Definitions*, the only exceptions being an anonymous virtue relative to small honours and *nemesis* (indignation). The last one is not really a virtue but rather a praiseworthy emotive state.

Some other terms in the *Definitions* can be found in the list of virtues in *EE* II 3: *karteria* and *phronêsis*; they are not considered examples of the right mean in *NE*. In *NE* VI *phronêsis* is an intellectual virtue but not a right mean; *karteria* in *NE* VII is considered something between virtue and vice, as well as *enkrateia*. Some virtues present in the Pseudo-Platonic list are denied the status of virtue by Aristotle: *alupia* is said to be not a praiseworthy quality in *NE* 1153a31. Others are considered not to be independent virtues but part of larger virtues or similar to them: for instance *epieikeia* is in the same *genos* as *dikasiosunê* (V 10(14)); *anchinoia* and *euboulia* are similar to *phronêsis*, *tharsos* is a passion and is considered to be part of *andreia* (*NE* 1103b17, 1105b22). *Kosmoiotês* in *NE* is considered as the opposite of *akrasia* (1109a16) and in *EE* is a consequence of *megaloprepeia* (1233a34). *Philanthrôpia* is mentioned in *NE* VIII (1155a20) but only in a short remark. *Eleutheria* is mentioned only in *NE* V and in a political sense (1131a28, 1134a27). *Philoponia* is mentioned in *EE* (1222a38) as a natural disposition which is not a real virtue. Other elements present in the Pseudo-Platonic list of definitions are much praised by Aristotle without being considered virtues in the proper sense: *autarcheia* is a quality of happiness, *eudaimonia*; *kalogagathia* is mentioned only in *EE* VIII 3 as the sum of all virtues, moral and intellectual. The only virtue in the Pseudo-Platonic list completely forgotten by Aristotle is *eusebeia*, which, strangely enough, is never mentioned in the two Aristotelian *Ethics*.

It seems that Aristotle has consciously made a selection from the Pseudo-Platonic list of particular virtues discussed in the Academy, accepting some of them, refusing others and putting others in a secondary place. The result is a picture of the virtuous man, the *spoudaios*, very different from the picture we find in other philosophers. For instance the main virtues of Xenophon's *spoudaios* are *eusebeia*, *euteleia*, *enkrateia*, *karteria*, *autarcheia* and *alêtheia*, (piety, economy, self-restraint, fortitude, self-sufficiency, veracity), a list very appropriate for an ancient general turned farmer. In Plato's *Republic* (485a–487a) the Philosopher-ruler has the following virtues: first, love of knowledge, and afterwards *apseudeia*, *sôphrosunê*, *megaloprepeia*, *andreia*, *dikaiosunê*, being

hêmēros, mnēmnikos, emmetros, eumathês and *eucharis*, (sincerity, temperance, magnificence, courage, justice, even temper, memory, good measure, quick learning, culture). This is a very appropriate list for a scholar-cum-ruler, as the Philosopher in the *Republic* seems to be.

It looks as if Aristotle had a conception of the ideal man very different from Xenophon's or Plato's. Some think that Aristotle's virtuous man is simply a good citizen, pleasant to meet, nice and appreciated by everybody. But if we look closer, we find him to be different from ordinary citizens: his way of being courageous is different from the usual civic bravery (1115b11–13; 1116a17–19), his pride accepts praise only by people he considers good and not by successful people, and his love of honours or his wit are subordinated to his concern for the fine. He could be considered a person living 'a little apart' from the normal life of a *polis*, too good to mix with everybody and very selective in his friendships. Nonetheless his proper home, I think, is Athens and not Kallipolis.¹³

Obviously, we are speaking about people living the *politikos bios* and not the *bios theôretikos*, and we should devote a separate discussion to the *kalokagathos* in *EE* VIII 3, but it seems to me that this very distinction between two *bioi* indicates how far Aristotle's idea of virtue is from Plato's.

6. *Parts or species?*

The last problem concerns the relationship between virtue in general and the particular virtues. Up till now we have seen that moral virtues are a species of a common genus, *aretê*, and it is natural to think that particular moral virtues are sub-species of this species. Aristotle sometimes says that the general definition of moral virtue is *katholou* and that it applies to *kath' hekasta* kinds of virtue, such as courage, temperance and so on (1107a28–33). But sometimes Aristotle uses for the particular moral virtues the term *merê*, 'parts' of virtue in general (*EE* 1248b8: *kata meros peri hekastês aretês eiretai*; *NE* 1107a30–31: *logoi epi merous*; 1130a9: *meros aretês*; 1130a14: *en merei aretês*; see also *Rhet.* 1366b1; *Pol.* 1281a9

¹³ My position on this point has changed following the criticisms by Terry Irwin. I agree on most of his remarks, but I still cannot admit that Aristotle's *spoudaios* is so far apart from the average *polis* of his time as Plato's philosopher, who is at home only in the ideal state, as Irwin suggested in his comments.

and 1270a6). The term derives from Plato's *Protagoras*, to be sure. Hence, one could ask whether, according to him, particular virtues are species of a genus or parts of a whole.

Already in the time of Alexander of Aphrodisias the problem was discussed. We have two of the *Ethical problems* attributed to him, 8 and 28, dedicated to this point (on these passages see Sharples 2000). In *Eth. probl.* 8 it is said that virtue cannot be a genus of which particular virtues are species, because in a normal genus-species relation, as in animals, if one species disappears, the others can persist. On the contrary in the field of moral virtues, if one virtue is lacking, all disappear, and the genus itself is destroyed, because there is a reciprocal implication of all the virtues (128, 4–8, referring to *NE* 1144b32–1145a2). But neither can virtue be a whole of which single virtues are parts, because in general the definition of the whole does not apply to the parts, whereas here the definition of virtue in general applies to the single virtues (128, 10–12).

Two solutions are envisaged:

1. One could think that virtues are like the parts of the soul, in which rational soul is first and subsumes the other parts in itself; one could consider general virtue as first and the other virtues as depending on it (128, 12–17);
2. Alternatively one could say that the definition of virtue in general is different from the definitions of the single virtues (128, 17–22).

Eth. probl. 28 repeats the problem and adds a new solution:

3. there could be an uniform whole, in which the definition of the whole applies also to its parts, as in a *mixis*; moral virtues could be considered to be like a *mixis* of uniform elements (157,19–158,2).

The second solution is clearly impossible, because Aristotle repeatedly says that the general definition of moral virtues applies also to the single virtues (*NE* 1114b26–29 + 1115a4–5 and 1127a15–18). One could either accept solution # 3, or one could stipulate that moral virtue is indeed the genus of particular virtues, and add in this case a new condition: it is a genus in which the elimination of a single species makes the whole disappear. The question remains open, as far as we can see.

There are other characteristics of moral virtues to be mentioned in the present context. Between single virtues there are subspecies, as it seems. In the *NE* courage and temperance are united because they are “virtues of

the non-rational part” (1117b23–24). This seems to be a Platonic remark not made by Aristotle in his own name, but in any case it is useful in distinguishing the first two moral virtues from the group of virtues related to social relationships (Anonymous 1892, 169,22–25). Virtues like generosity and magnificence are relative to money and its use; there is an asymmetrical implication between them, because every magnificent person is also generous, but not vice versa (1122a29–30; b10–14). In the virtues relative to honours, there is the same relationship: we have a virtue, pride (*megalopsuchia*) and an anonymous virtue relative to small honours; Aristotle says that it is possible to have the second without the first one, but not vice versa. These observations limit somewhat the principle according to which moral virtues are inseparable, and one could doubt that a *spoudaios* needs to have all the virtues listed by Aristotle (cf. Irwin 1988, 61–62; for a general survey of the discussion see Sharples 2000, footnotes 5 and 8).

Virtues relative to money and honours are united by commentators in a single block, as virtues relative to external goods. Pride, in particular, in a way unifies all the moral virtues, since it is *kosmos tis ... tôn aretôn*, a sort of adornment of other moral virtues (1124a1–2, see also *EE* 1232a35–36, and b24). Pride unifies all the moral virtues from a psychological point of view, because the emotional characteristics of the proud man require him to have all the virtues. A different unification is required by the virtue of justice in general. I have discussed this problem in another essay (Natali 2007), and I cannot give a complete discussion of the point here.

Three further moral virtues can be collected in a single group, because they deal with “conversation” (1126b10–12, cf. 1228b5–6 and 1108a9–12); they are friendliness, an unnamed virtue relating to truth, and wit (*philia*, *alêtheia*, *eutrapelia*). In *EE* *philia* appears only in the list of virtues at 1221a7, and disappears afterwards; the other two are described as “praiseworthy, but different from virtue ... because they do not involve choice” (*EE* 1234a23–25, cf. 1233b36, 1234a4–9). In the same category *EE* lists also indignation (*nemesis*), shame (*aidôs*) and dignity (*semnotês*) (1233b24, 26, 34). *Aidos* is not considered a proper virtue also in *NE*, because “it resembles a passion and not an habitual state of mind” (1128b10–11, cf. 1108a30–32). *Nemesis* is listed in *NE* II 7 but not discussed in *NE* IV, and many scholars think that the end of the book is lost.

Some virtues have forms similar to them, but inferior to the real thing and not proper virtues. Courage has five similar kinds, called *tropoi*

or *eidê* (*NE* 1116a18, *EE* 1229a 11), none of which is really a virtue. Temperance has no species, but intemperance is said to come in different ways. This is strange, because in *NE* V Aristotle formulates the principle according to which if a vice is said in many ways, the corresponding virtue will be said in many ways too (1121b16).

Book IV ends with a reference to books VII and V:

Self-control is not a virtue either, but a mixing of some sort. We will speak later about it. Now let us discuss justice. (1128b33–35)

The passage has been considered by some scholars as spurious, like the preceding one (1108b7–10). Some doubt all the passage (Grant 1874, II 94); others admit the reference to *enkrateia* because they think that it makes sense to refer to *enkrateteia* after *aidôs*. Aristotle's meaning would be the following: if *aidôs* is not a virtue, neither can *enkrateia* be a virtue (Ramsauer 1879, 280; Stewart 1892, I 372; Burnet 1900, 201; Dirlmeier 1956, 396; Gauthier 1970, II 324). There is a similar reference to *enkrateia* at the end of *EE* III.2:

A more accurate division of the genus of pleasures will be made in the following discussion about self-control. (1231b2–4)

Most commentators think that the reference is to *NE* VII 1–10(11), where there is a discussion of *akrasia* and *enkrateia* and there are many distinctions about different kinds of pleasure. But some think that the allusion is to *Rhet* II 9 (Monro 1876, 186; Tricot 1959, 212; Susemihl, in the critical apparatus to 1128b35).

7. Conclusion

We can say that the theory of particular virtues has made the definition of happiness given in book I more precise, less obscure and more practical. Now Aristotle's student knows that in order to be happy he must be active with both the rational parts of his soul, that he must practice moral virtues as well as intellectual virtues; besides, he knows that in the moral field he must look for the right mean and must make good choices, and that the relevant areas are: courage, physical pleasures, fine actions relative to money and honours, and to the sphere of public conversation (Anagnostopoulos 1994, 174–175). But Aristotle's practical advice in the *NE* stops at the *infimae species*, the lowest generalisations, because the judgement of particular situations is left by him to moral perception, *aisthêsis*, both in intellectual and in moral knowledge.

As Aristotle himself says at *NE* 1109b23: “the judgement about it depends on perception” (*en tēi aisthēsei hē krisis*).

This is what distinguishes Aristotle, with all his insistence on the importance of getting the particular act right, from the contemporary re-evaluation of the attention to particulars in moral field, proposed by philosophers working in the footsteps of Wittgenstein, Murdoch and others (Laugier 2006 and 2008). The attention to particulars, without a general point of reference or universal criteria, seems to lead contemporary moralists to a narrative approach to reality, to an appeal to immediate perception and to be more caring and sensitive to life. This is something Aristotle would surely appreciate, but would also consider outside the limits of philosophy. In Aristotle’s view the universal is not the cold resumé of a warm living experience. On the contrary, the very possibility of knowing the particular depends on the possession of the universal, as he says both in the *Analytics* and in the *Metaphysics*, because, as we saw at the beginning, the particular always falls under an universal that explains it (*to d’ēn toutōi kath’ hekaston*, 981a22).

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CHAPTER THREE

WHAT'S A PARTICULAR AND WHAT MAKES IT SO? SOME THOUGHTS, MAINLY ABOUT ARISTOTLE

VERITY HARTE

1. *Framework questions*

This paper has two objectives. The first is to articulate a project. The second is to take one, small step towards executing the project. The project may be articulated by two broad questions.

The first is a general philosophical question regarding what relation, if any, there is between two conceptions of particularity that emerge from the two main metaphysical contexts in which one finds talk of particulars.

On the one hand, particulars are the largely neglected partner in discussions of the problem of universals; neglected, insofar as particulars appear in this context to be entities taken as given.¹ In contexts such as this, a particular is defined, at least in part, in contrast to a universal. A universal is a repeatable item, something common to many things; hence a universal is located in the many places in which these things are located. A particular, by contrast, is a non-repeatable item; it has a unique occurrence or location, in the case of spatio-temporal particulars, a unique location in space and time.

This way of drawing the contrast between particular and universal undoubtedly has difficulties, if, for example, there are universals that are, of necessity, uniquely instantiated or vacuous universals that have no instantiations. Again, it is unclear whether universals must have many actual instantiations or are merely such as to be capable of multiple instantiation. These difficulties are entirely germane to the project, insofar as they bear on the success of candidate ways of drawing the distinction between universal and particular such that a notion of particularity

¹ See, for a representative example, Loux 2006, 19.

might appear. Nevertheless, my purpose at present is simply to point to the distinction in question in ways that are familiar, however inadequate they may, upon investigation, turn out to be.

Central to the particularity of particulars, when distinguished from universals in this way, is a certain sort of uniqueness, though this need not be understood in terms of uniqueness of location in space and time. After all, a space or time might itself be a particular. And there may be particulars that are not in space or time; for the theist, god might be such a particular. But the central idea seems to be that a particular is a one-off; it is in some way unique. If a particular is perishable, then once it has gone, there is no getting *it* back.²

This uniqueness of particulars comes under scrutiny in the other main metaphysical context in which there is talk of particulars: the problem of individuation. What *makes* a particular the unique particular that it is? Is a particular particular—that is, is a particular the very thing that it is and no other—because of some peculiar qualitative make up it has? So say defenders of the Identity of Indiscernibles. Against this, some have argued that particularity needs no such qualitative discernibility, but is a primitive feature of things.³ Others again have argued that particularity is a function of the location of features in space and time.⁴ But such a view depends on controversial questions about the nature of space and time and on controversial decisions about the possibility of non spatio-temporal particulars.⁵ In discussions such as these, the focus of the discussion is the metaphysical basis of particularity; they do not target the contrast between universal and particular as such.

In these two contexts of discussion, the particularity of particulars has the role of distinguishing them from two different items: (i) the particularity of particulars has the role of, somehow, distinguishing particular from universal; and (ii) the particularity of particulars has the role of distinguishing one particular from another. The first of the three questions that articulate the project that forms the background frame of this paper is what, if any, relation there is between the sorts of particularity that are required of a particular for it to play each of these roles.

² Even this is not straightforward: what about the possibility of reincarnation?

³ See the two sides in Black 1952, and compare Della Rocca 2005, in response to Adams 1979.

⁴ In particular, Strawson 1959.

⁵ Cf. MacBride 2005, 565–566.

The second question is a historical question of when and how these two rather different demands came to be placed upon particulars. In this paper, I shall focus on a narrower question regarding the nature and origins of the particular-universal distinction. It is natural to treat the distinction between particular and universal as an essential and unassailable part not just of *our*, but of *the* metaphysical framework. But this, I think, may be mistaken. Further, while it is not my own intention to call the distinction itself into question, we should not suppose that such question could never arise. Indeed such question has already arisen.⁶ If it is possible for the particular-universal distinction to be called into question, then it would seem to be useful to have some kind of understanding of how the distinction has arisen and why. My paper is intended to make a first, small step in this direction. The thought, in connection with the first of my questions, is that by seeing how particulars first came to be distinguished as such, in contrast to universals, we can see what kind of particularity this distinction involved in its original conception.

In a step towards executing this project, I propose, in this paper, to pick up the narrower historical question and apply it to Plato and Aristotle, asking whether and how Plato and Aristotle distinguish particular from universal and, if they do so, what conception of particularity emerges from the contrast they draw.

Why talk about Plato and Aristotle in this connection? The first reason is that each is at least a candidate for being the first philosopher in the Western tradition, not just to include items that may reasonably be thought of as particulars in their ontology, but also to think of them as particulars, in contrast to universals, and hence to be concerned with this aspect of particularity as such.⁷ The second reason is that the work of each provides contexts in which the question of whether some item is a particular or a universal has generated a good deal of controversy. Examples of this include forms—both Platonic and Aristotelian—and, in Aristotle, the status of individual items in the non-substantial categories. It is this latter on which I will eventually focus. But I want to begin with some reasons why I do not think I will find my answer in Plato.

⁶ Ramsey 1925 and, most recently, MacBride 2005.

⁷ There may be Presocratic thinkers whom I am unjustly neglecting.

2. *Universals, particulars and Plato's Forms*

Plato, of course, is often cited as a proponent of an early (perhaps, the earliest) theory of universals.⁸ In scholarship about Plato, however, interpreters of Platonic Forms have understood them both as being universal in character and as being particular in character.⁹ For my purposes what matters is not the resolution of the question of whether Platonic Forms are particular or universal, but the existence of reasons to suppose that drawing the particular-universal distinction was not part of Plato's purpose in introducing Forms.¹⁰

The first reason is that, irrespective of whether Forms are best understood as being universal or as being particular, they do not appear to be the only items in Plato's ontology that are of this sort. Hence, if Plato does think of Forms as being either particular or universal, this cannot be what he takes to be especially distinctive about them. On the assumption that Forms are particulars, this seems obvious. There will be many other items in Plato's ontology that are also particular. However, on an understanding of Forms as universals, it may seem less obvious that they will not be the only items in Plato's ontology to be universal.

In proposing that Forms would not be the only items in Plato's ontology that would be universal in character, I follow an interpretation according to which, when talking of the perceptible counterparts to Forms, Plato, at least sometimes, refers to things that are universal in character: perceptible universal properties. According to this interpretation, he does so, for example, when, in a well-known passage of *Republic* Book V (478e7–479b10), he picks out a group of items with the description “the many beautifuls” (τὰ πολλὰ καλὰ e.g. 479a5–6).¹¹ According to the inter-

⁸ See, for example, Armstrong 1978 v. 1, 64; Loux 2006, 18–19.

⁹ As universals: Fine 1993, Fine 2003; as particulars: Geach 1965 treats Forms as perfect paradigms comparable to the standard metre. The view that Forms are stuffs (Denyer 1983) might also be included as a view according to which Forms are particulars, depending on the view one takes of stuffs.

¹⁰ A related argument can be found in Harte 2008. The conclusion I defend regarding Plato should, I think, be distinguished from that of Mann 2000. I draw no conclusion about Plato's recognition or otherwise of “things” (in Mann's terms) and am focused on at most *one* of two distinctions that play a role in Mann's story: (i) the distinction between objects and properties and (ii) the distinction between what is particular and what is general (see Mann 2000, 8–9).

¹¹ The interpretation was put forward by Gosling 1960 and is followed, e.g., by Fine 1993, Irwin 1977 and Irwin 1999. It is criticized by, e.g., Silverman 2002.

pretation I favour, the items called “the many beautifuls” in this passage are perceptible universal properties, such as “being brightly coloured”. They are the sorts of properties that (erroneously, in Socrates’ view) might be offered as candidate explanations of the beauty of some perceptible beautiful object, such as a lithograph by Miró. Such properties are universal, since they are themselves repeatable items; for example, many Miró lithographs have in common being brightly coloured. But these properties are clearly distinguished from Forms, which are non-perceptible.

Even if one does not favour this specific line of interpretation, however, one ought to agree that Forms would not be the only items in Plato’s ontology that would be universal in character. Consider, for example, the action type: returning what one owes. This, as Socrates argues, mistaken candidate for identification with the Form of Justice, seems to be something that is universal in character. And there is no indication that, although it is not the Form of Justice, it is, nevertheless, a Form.¹²

This brings me to a second, related reason for supposing that the particular-universal distinction was not part of Plato’s purpose in introducing Forms. This is that when Plato constructs the “other” to Forms, he does so in a way that encompasses both items that are particular and items that are universal. By the “other” to Forms, I mean not merely whatever is different from Forms but the items that are typically contrasted with Forms in arguments centrally involving Forms. Misleadingly, these “other” to Forms are often referred to as “particulars”; but Plato’s “particulars” are not all metaphysically particular, or so I contend.

They are not all metaphysically particular, because, for example, both the perceptible universals that I find in *Republic* book V and such rejected candidates as the action type, returning what one owes, are included in Plato’s construction of the “other” to Forms. They are included in, but, in my view, do not exclusively constitute the “other” to Forms, which elsewhere seems to include things that are metaphysically particular in character. In *Phaedo* 78d10–e4, for example, the expression “the many beautifuls” (τὰ πολλὰ καλὰ) is illustrated by a list including people,

¹² Of course, one might argue that it is, on the basis of some general principle about how to determine the scope of Forms. But, notoriously, it is very hard to see what, if any, general principle is available to determine the scope of Forms. And it would beg the very question I am raising to argue that it must be a Form *because* universal.

horses and clothing. In the *Phaedo*, then, the expression “the many beautifuls” appears to refer to metaphysically particular items: people, horses, items of clothing.¹³

Finally, we may note yet a third reason, which is the existence in Plato’s ontology of plausibly metaphysically particular items that are neither Forms nor particulars and hence do not seem to fall on either side of the contrast between Forms and their specified “others”. These include individual souls and individual gods. But if this is the case, being particular cannot be a hallmark of *either* side of the contrast between Forms and their counterparts.

None of this shows that Plato failed to understand the particular-universal distinction. But it does suggest that this distinction is not part of the way he draws the contours of his ontology.¹⁴ This is one example of the way in which, without prejudice to the question of whether or not some item in a philosopher’s ontology is best understood as being particular or universal, one can question the centrality of the distinction in that philosopher’s own thinking. And if the distinction is not central to Plato’s thinking, this is not the place to look for an understanding of what sort of particularity the distinction between particular and universal might require.

3. *Introducing the Questions regarding Aristotle on which I shall focus*

I turn now from Plato to Aristotle. I shall focus on Aristotle’s *Categories*. First, however, this focus and the use I shall make of the *Categories* require some cautionary remarks. In discussing the *Categories*, I shall be focused on aspects of what may be viewed as the *ontology* of the work. However, although it is true that, in chapter two of the *Categories*, Aristotle offers a fourfold division of beings (*ta onta*, 1a20), it is far from

¹³ Again, not everyone will accept this example. See, for example, Irwin 1977, 10. Again, however, it should not be problematic to identify *some such* example that cannot easily be brought into dispute: the beautiful girl of *Hippias Major* 287e4, for example.

¹⁴ As a generalization about Plato’s ontology, the motivation for the suggestion is incomplete, of course, for it has not considered contexts besides discussions of Forms in which Plato might be thought to draw and exploit the universal-particular contrast. The discussion of the receptacle in the *Timaeus* or the discussions of the unlimited in the *Philebus* may be the most obvious outstanding candidates for consideration. But I shall not consider these here.

clear that Aristotle's purpose, in the *Categories* as a whole, is to provide us with an exposition of Aristotle's metaphysics of being. Menn has argued forcefully that the *Categories* is "a manual of principles of dialectical reasoning" (Menn 1995, 326), which is, by and large, neutral on metaphysical questions that would elsewhere be the subject of considerable dispute between, for example, himself and the Platonists. I mean to remain neutral on the question of Aristotle's own purpose. I will be content if, in what follows, I identify the sort of materials on which various later readings of Aristotle may turn out to be based. In turn, it is the enormous, and well-known, significance of the *Categories* in the later history of Western philosophy that lends support to the hope that an examination of this, admittedly small piece of the Aristotelian corpus may nonetheless prove fruitful as a step in the direction of the historical side of the project with which this paper is framed. My starting point is a familiar interpretative debate about Aristotle's *Categories*, which I approach from an unfamiliar angle.

I begin with a puzzle about the *literature* on the *Categories*. Let me reserve the term "indivisible" to pick out what Aristotle picks out by use of the term "*atom*" (*atomon*) and without prejudice to the question of whether such an indivisible is something metaphysically particular or universal. Then, as is widely known, there has been fierce dispute as to whether the items that Aristotle identifies as indivisibles in categories other than the category of substance are particular or universal; but, at least to my knowledge, there has been no corresponding dispute as to whether the items he identifies as indivisibles in the category of substance are particular or universal. There is, I take it, a general agreement that indivisibles in the category of substance are particular.

Why is this puzzling? Because it would seem that, although there are salient differences between indivisibles in the category of substance and indivisibles in the non-substantial categories, these differences do not seem to be differences of the right sort to explain why it should be that, in the one case, it is uncontroversial that we are dealing with something particular, whereas, in the other case, it is not. This is because the difference between indivisibles in the category of substance and indivisibles in the non-substantial categories lies in the fact that indivisibles in the non-substantial categories *can*, whereas indivisibles in the categories of substance cannot, be *present in* something, where "presence in" (being present in a subject), as Aristotle explicates it, indicates some kind of dependence in being of that which is in on that which it is in

(*Cat* 1a24–25). But, at least without some prior philosophical theory, it is not at all obvious why it should be the case that a lack of dependence in being should make it *obvious* that the items in question are particular. And, in any case, since this lack of dependence in being seems to be something that indivisibles in the category of substance share with the other items in the category of substance that are *not* indivisible, it seems clear that Aristotle could not consistently take such lack of dependence to be a *hallmark* of particularity.

Further, the qualities that we would expect to be the qualities—if any—that are the hallmarks of particularity are those qualities of the indivisibles in the category of substance that are in fact shared with the indivisibles in the non-substantial categories. These are (i) the quality of being indivisible itself, together with the qualities of (ii) not being said of a subject, and (iii) being one in number, however these may relate to each other and whatever they mean. But, if these qualities are *shared* by the indivisibles in both of our categories, we are left with the puzzle of why it should nevertheless be the case that there is taken to be a genuine question as to whether the items in the non-substantial categories are particular or universal, but at the same time no corresponding question about the indivisibles in the category of substance.

Although I have begun with a puzzle about the literature on the *Categories*, the problem I am interested in is not *solely* about the literature on the *Categories*. Both parties to the traditional dispute can, I think, be motivated to consider the questions on which I shall focus. For reasons I shall try to make clear, the focus of my questions, at least in the first place, will be the particularity that is, by both sides, *undisputed*: the particularity of indivisibles in the category of substance. First, however, I want to show that both sides in the dispute can be motivated to take an interest in the questions that follow.

Given the way in which the puzzle about the literature has been set up, one might doubt whether questions arising from it could be of equal interest to both sides in the dispute. Indeed, one might suppose that the puzzle offers a way in which to *settle* the dispute in the particularists' favour. For one might think that, the arguments of opponents such as Owen [1965] 1986, 252–258 and M. Frede [1978] 1987, 49–71 notwithstanding, the common agreement that the indivisibles in the category of substance are metaphysically particular items, combined with the comparability of the terminology that is used to characterize indivisibles of both sorts, is reason to suppose that indivisibles in the non-substantial categories must be metaphysically particular also. Although, in the end,

I think an argument with roughly this strategy would be successful,¹⁵ the questions from which I begin can at least initially be motivated *whatever* one's view about the status of non-substantial indivisibles.

I start with the easier case first: those who take indivisibles in the non-substantial categories not to be particular items.¹⁶ It seems clear that proponents of this position owe us an account of what, in their view, makes it the case that an indivisible in the category of substance—unlike an indivisible in the non-substantial categories—is a particular item. And it would seem that this account could not turn on any of the features that are attributed to indivisible substance, taken on their own. The features of not being said of a subject, of being indivisible, and of being numerically one are common to non-substantial indivisibles also, and hence cannot be held by proponents of this view to be hallmarks of particularity. There is one feature that does turn out to be distinctive of the presumed metaphysically particular, substantial indivisibles. What is distinctive of substantial indivisibles is the conjunctive feature that they are neither said of a subject, nor in a subject. Hence, this conjunctive feature could be the basis of their particularity. But we would need some account of how particularity is explained by this negative conjunction, when it is not a function of either conjunct taken on its own.

What, then, of the other side in the dispute, of particularist readers?¹⁷ After all, readers of this camp do indeed hold that particularity is common to the items that are identified as not being said of a subject and as being indivisible and numerically one. Thus, it seems that, unlike their opponents, they could take these shared features to be the hallmarks of particularity as such. Interestingly, although particularist readers have sometimes appealed to these shared characteristics as part of their argument,¹⁸ at least since Ackrill (1963), the main focus of argument has been Aristotle's obscure explication of inherence at *Categories* 1a24–25, in which Aristotle characterizes the relation of being present in a

¹⁵ This is not to say that, in the dialectical context of the dispute at issue, one could simply produce such an argument and expect to command assent.

¹⁶ Owen [1965] 1986, 252–258, M. Frede [1978] 1987, 49–71 and, most recently, Erginel 2004.

¹⁷ These include: J.R. Jones 1949; Ackrill 1963; Allen 1969; Duerlinger 1970; B. Jones 1972; Heinaman 1981; Devereux 1992, Devereux 1998; Wedin 1993.

¹⁸ For example, Jones 1949, 154 treats “not being said of a subject” as equivalent to not being universal or being particular (and cf. Duerlinger 1970, 183); Allen 1969, 37 argues that in *Categories* to be indivisible (*atomon*) is to be particular; and Devereux 1992, 115 with n. 3 argues for an entailment from being “indivisible (*atomon*) and numerically one” to being particular (defended further in Devereux 1998).

subject as being “in something, not as a part, being incapable of being separate from that in which it is”. Taking this to maintain that inhering items cannot exist apart from their *particular* bearer, Ackrill argued, first, that *only* non-substantial indivisibles could be inherent and, second, that such inhering non-substantial indivisibles must be metaphysically particular in character, something like tropes (Ackrill 1963, 74–76). Since the first of these claims seems vulnerable to counter-examples taken from the *Categories* itself, subsequent particularists have generally followed Ackrill only on the second of these claims.¹⁹

Now, it may be the case that, while the features that are shared between substantial and non-substantial indivisibles are not part of the *justification* typically offered by particularists for the view that non-substantial indivisibles, like their substantial counterparts, are particular in character, these shared features are nevertheless viewed as providing the *marks* of particularity, once particularity has been established for indivisibles across the board. But this is precisely one of the questions on which I shall focus. Further, since particularists typically view the particularity of non-substantial indivisibles as parasitic on the presumed particularity of substantial indivisibles,²⁰ such readers can certainly be motivated to consider the question from which I begin.

In sum, whatever one’s position in the debate from which I began, the questions I shall consider are relevant. These questions are:

1. Is it the case that what is identified as an indivisible in the category of substance is something metaphysically particular?
2. What exactly is it that is identified as an indivisible in the category of substance and what is the significance of the way in which it is identified?
3. Is an indivisible in the category of substance picked out as being something metaphysically particular? That is, is this part of Aristotle’s classification or characterization thereof?

How does question 3 differ from question 1? Question 1 asks whether it is as a matter of fact the case that the items Aristotle identifies as indi-

¹⁹ Counter-examples are found, it appears, immediately, at *Cat* 1a28–b2, where Aristotle says that “knowledge” (and not “the indivisible knowledge”) is in the soul. For post-Akrill particularists’ revised strategy on this point, see, for example, Duerlinger 1970, 185–186; Heinaman 1981, 303.

²⁰ See, for example, Allen 1969, 31 and B. Jones 1972, 115.

visibles in the category of substance are reasonably thought of as being particular. Question 3 asks whether their particularity is part of Aristotle's characterization of them. To see that answers to these questions may sometimes come apart, recall that (on my view, at least) it is true of some of the Platonic entities conventionally referred to as "particulars", and which I have characterized as the "other" to Forms, that they are particular, but that their particularity is not part of Plato's characterization of them.

4. *Indivisible Substances: the 'indivisible human'*

Even the most casual student of Aristotle might be expected to be able to provide an example of what, in the view of the *Categories*, will count as an indivisible, and hence primary, substance: an individual human being such as Socrates or Xanthippe; or an individual horse such as Shergar or Sir Desmond. This view of the identity of the primary substances of the *Categories* is endorsed by scholars on both sides of the dispute about non-substantial indivisibles. Indeed, so far as I know, this view has never been called into question. Nor is it my intention to do so now.

More to the point, then, I want to point to the prevalence of the practice of giving *names* to one's examples of primary substance. This too is a practice to be found in scholars on both sides of the afore-mentioned dispute.²¹ But it seems worth noting that, although Aristotle very often uses personal names when he is giving examples, talk of indivisible substances in the *Categories* is not such an occasion. Rather, Aristotle uses the somewhat cumbersome expressions: *ho tis anthrôpos*²² and *ho tis hippos* (e.g. 1b4–5) which, for reasons of neutrality, I translate as "the indivisible human" and "the indivisible horse". The only occasions in the *Categories* when the names of particular individuals are mentioned are two occasions during the discussion of contrariety in *Categories* 10–11.²³ And, even setting aside the general question of how these late chapters—the so-called *Post-Praedicamenta*—connect to the first nine

²¹ See, for example, Owen [1965] 1986, 253, and Ackrill 1963, 79, 80.

²² This expression and the others like it are constructed from (i) the definite article; (ii) an indefinite pronoun which can be used together with other words to introduce some element of indefiniteness; (iii) a sortal noun. How the construction should be understood to work is something I discuss in some detail below.

²³ 13b14–15 with its immediately following context and 14a10–14.

chapters of the *Categories*, neither of these occasions provides an example in which Aristotle uses the proper name of a particular, human individual for a primary substance explicitly identified as such. In one context, it seems pretty clear that what is under discussion is contrary statements, exemplified by the statements “Socrates is healthy” and “Socrates is sick”; in the other, something like the corresponding states of affairs.

R.E. Allen has claimed that the Greek expressions *ho tis anthrôpos* and *ho tis hippos* ‘mean, respectively, “a particular man” and “a particular horse”’ (Allen 1969, 31, my emphasis). But, assuming that by “particular” he means what is metaphysically so, this cannot, I think, be uncontroversially true, else the dispute about non-substantial indivisibles—to which Allen, of course, is party—could be settled in one fell swoop by the use of the same combination of definite article, indefinite pronoun and sort in the non-substantial cases (*to ti leukon*; “the indivisible white”, e.g., at 1a27). The use of the indefinite pronoun combined with a sort does not seem to mandate talk of particularity. In Plato’s *Meno*, Socrates uses the indefinite pronoun in a similar locution when he asks Meno whether roundness is *shape* or is *a shape* (*schêma* or *schêma ti*, 74b6–7). The question here is not whether roundness is a metaphysically particular item, but whether it is, not shape in general, but some specific *sort* of shape. This use, however, is not precisely parallel to that of the *Categories* since there is here no parallel for Aristotle’s use of the definite article in his expression.

Liddell & Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon*²⁴ report a philosophical usage in which the indefinite pronoun is used with article “to denote a particular individual who is not specified in the general formula, although he would be in the particular case”, but their star witness for this usage is, of course, just Aristotle himself.²⁵ More interesting is their report of a Sophoclean example of *ho kurios tis* (OC 289) for “the person in authority *whoever he be*”. The device then seems to be one in which one refers to some particular individual, but does so in such a way as to make a point of indefiniteness. This shows up particularly nicely in another Sophoclean example (OT 106), where the device is used to enable Creon to tell *Oedipus* that the killers of Laius, *whoever they may be*, must be punished, in a context in which *we*, but not *they*, know that Oedipus is the individual in question. I shall come back to this thought about deliberate indefiniteness later.

²⁴ Ninth edition, with new supplement, 1996 s.v. τίς, τι A. 10, a & b.

²⁵ They also refer to Sextus Empiricus *PH* II.223, but this seems a red herring.

Presumably, the Sophoclean precedent for the use of the expression to refer, even if in an indefinite fashion, to a particular individual, though helpful, cannot carry the day in a philosophical context in which metaphysical boundaries are being drawn. Thus, even without the intention of questioning the general consensus as to the status of indivisible substances, it seems worth asking what makes us all so *sure* that what Aristotle means to pick out when he talks of “the indivisible human” is a particular human individual he might equally have picked out by the use of a sample proper name. It should not simply be that we are unable to think of anything else that could fall under the species human (no human equivalent of Owen’s “vink” (Owen [1965] 1987, 253), the name Owen coins for a wholly determinate shade of pink, the item which, on Owen’s non-particularist side of the debate, he takes to be an example of an indivisible in a non-substantial category). After all, Plato’s *Politicus* envisages general divisions of the species human into Greek and Barbarian (262c9–263a1). Of course, it does so precisely to illustrate ways in which one can go wrong in division; but it is not clear it rules out in principle some further division of human into more specific, but still universal-in-character, sub-types. And there are still more arcane, but philosophically pertinent possibilities, such as the following characterisation of Aquinas’ view of, not humans, but angels: “each angel is an *infima species* ... rather than a particular instance of a species” (Lowe 1998, 225).²⁶ Aristotle considers some questions related to these in a passage in *Metaphysics* Iota: chapter 9, where he states that “humans” (*hoi anthrôpoi*) are not “species” (*eidê*)²⁷ of human (1058b6–7). But the passage is tricky, and, unlike the *Categories*, is focused on the differentiating effects of matter in the constitution of hylomorphically complex individuals.

Here, then, are two reasons to suppose that the general consensus is right, and that Aristotle’s indivisible substances are indeed particular individuals:

First, is Aristotle’s identification as “most distinctive” of substance the fact that, “being one and the same in number, [a substance] is receptive

²⁶ Cf. also Klima 2008, who notes that this view was subsequently condemned as heretical. I do not know whether it is correct to characterize Aquinas’ view in this way, but, for my purposes here, it is the possible availability of the view that matters, and not whether or not it was in fact held by Aquinas.

²⁷ “Species” seems the right translation here, even though I am sympathetic to the arguments of Driscoll 1981.

of contraries" (4a10–11). This fact is illustrated by the example of "an indivisible human, who, being one and the same, comes to be pale at one time and dark at another, and hot and cold, bad and good" (4a18–21). As the example itself makes clear, it is most natural to understand this distinctive ability as the ability of one and the same *particular* individual to have contrary qualities at different times. True, it is odd that Aristotle makes this distinctive of *substance*, apparently in general, when, as it is most naturally understood, it would seem to be a feature of primary substances only.²⁸ But any temptation to use this to deny that what Aristotle has in view is something particular runs up against the problem that any obvious way in which a universal is "receptive of contraries"—by having contrary instances, for example—would fail to distinguish *substance* from anything else.

The second reason is found in *Cat* 2a36–2b3, in which Aristotle illustrates the claim that "everything else" (2a34) is either said of the primary substances as subjects or is in them as subjects:

For example, animal is predicated (*katêgoreitai*) of human, and so also of the indivisible human—because if it were predicated of no one of the indivisible humans, nor would it be predicated of human taken as a whole (*holôs*) again, colour is in body, and so also in an indivisible body—because if it were not in any of the *particulars* (*tôn kath' hekasta*), it would not be in body taken as a whole (*holôs*). (My emphasis)

The point I draw attention to here is Aristotle's use of the expression *ta kath' hekasta* as equivalent to "the indivisible bodies", that is, to indivisibles in the category of substance. At least sometimes, this expression comes close to being a piece of technical Aristotelian vocabulary to pick out something metaphysically particular, in contrast to a universal. Consider, for example, *De Interpretatione* 7, 17a38–b1:

... of things, some are universal (*katholou*) whereas others are particular (*kath' hekaston*)—by universal I mean what is such as to be predicated of many things, and by particular what is not; for example, man is among the universals, whereas Callias is among the particulars.

Now, matters are not entirely straightforward here, since, although the expression *ta kath' hekasta* can be used to pick out things that are metaphysically particular, the expression can also be used to pick out universals that are picked out as being *more specific* than some still more

²⁸ Cf. Ackrill 1963, 89.

general types.²⁹ In the *de Interpretatione* passage cited, it is clearly referring to particulars. Here we have what we do not have in the *Categories*, the proper name of an individual used as an example. But the apparent similarity of the *de Interpretatione* contrast between the expressions *to kath' hekaston* and *to katholou*, where it is clear that the contrast is between universal and particular, and the *Categories* contrast of *ta kath' hekasta* with man or body *holôs*³⁰ provides reason to understand the *Categories* examples as no less particular. I shall return to the significance of Aristotle's use of the same expression for items on both sides of the particular-universal distinction.

The consensus, then, seems right. Indivisibles in the category of substance are indeed such things as particular individual humans and animals of the sort that one might have identified by means of proper names. But there is reason to think, nevertheless, that there is some significance in the fact that Aristotle does not use proper names when giving examples of indivisible substances. For consider the following passage from later in *de Interpretatione* ch. 7, in which Aristotle illustrates the claim that there is a single denial of a single affirmation. I give Ackrill's translation.

It is clear that a single affirmation has a single negation. For the negation must deny the same thing as the affirmation affirmed, and of the same thing, whether a particular (*tôn kath' hekasta tinos*) or a universal (*apo tôn katholou*) (taken either universally or not universally (*ê hôs katholou ê hôs mê katholou*)). I mean, for example, "Socrates is white" and "Socrates is not white". But if something else is denied, or the same thing of something else, that will not be the opposite statement, but a different one. The opposite of "every man is white" is "not every man is white"; of "some man is white", "no man is white"; of "a man is white", "a man is not white". (17b37–18a7)

Interpretation of the passage is disputed.³¹ But the point to which I want to draw attention is not disputed. Notice that the affirmation "Socrates is white" (*esti Sôkratês leukos*) is here distinguished from the affirmation Ackrill translates as "some man is white" (*tis anthrôpos leukos*). The latter

²⁹ Cf. Fine 1993, 68, with n. 13 & 282 for cases.

³⁰ The point of similarity here is that the Greek word *to katholou* translated "universal" in the *de Int* passage quoted above is built around the term *holos*, "whole", used in the *Cat* passage quoted above, in the adverbial form *holôs*, translated "taken as a whole".

³¹ Contrast Ackrill 1963, *ad loc* and Whitaker 1996, 83–94.

features the *Categories*-style expression *tis anthrôpos*. The use may not be precisely parallel, for, once again, we do not have the use of the article in the expression. But it would appear that the expression is being used in a similar way; it is not, for example, being used to pick out some human *sort*. That the two affirmations differ is clear from the fact that their denials are different (“Socrates is not white”, for one; “no man is white”, for the other). Dispute on the passage has centred on where to locate the affirmation “some man is white” in terms of Aristotle’s opening classification: whether this is an example of an affirmation about a universal that is taken universally or of one about a universal that is not taken universally. But regardless of how this turns out, it is clear that the expression—somehow or other—ranges over the particular individuals that fall under the universal in question. Thus the fact that Socrates is white is sufficient, though not necessary, for the truth of the affirmation “some man is white”.³²

The difference that is made by the use of the expression *ho tis anthrôpos* rather than a proper name is—as our earlier Sophoclean example suggested it would be—its deliberate indefiniteness. It is an expression that Aristotle uses to refer to particular individual humans when he does not mean to refer to any particular individual human in particular. To this extent, the expression ignores what may be distinctive or special about any one particular individual. But this need not mean, I think, that the expression therefore refers to a particular individual human somehow denuded of all the things that may be distinctive or special about it.

Such a view might be attractive, if one thought that, properly speaking, a particular individual human who comes complete with all their peculiar attributes is somehow “spread out” across all ten of the categories. But there is, I think, no reason to insist on this. The temptation to think of a primary substance as a stripped down version of the individual human comes, I think, from the idea that the accidents of a substance are the things inherent in it. These accidents, then, are the items located in the other nine categories. But then it is tempting to suppose that the substance in which they inhere must be the individual *without* these accidents. This train of thought need not leave substances as “bare particulars”, for the substance in which the accidents inhere is still human and animal; at least, then, the indivisible substance would be an individ-

³² Cf. Whitaker 1996, 89.

ual essence. But, if an indivisible substance *is* human and animal, on the basis of human and animal being said of it as subject, then, by the same token,³³ this same indivisible substance will *have* all the accidental features that are in it as subject. So there is no need to think of it as being stripped of these accidents.

Thus, to sum up so far: in answer to two of the three questions from which I began, I would say that:

1. It is the case that what is identified as an indivisible in the category of substance is something metaphysically particular; and
2. It is a particular individual, “warts and all”, and not some stripped down version of an individual of the relevant type, that is identified as an indivisible in the category of substance. The significance of the *way* in which such indivisibles are identified is that they are identified in such a way as deliberately to ignore everything that is distinctive about the indivisibles in question when compared to each other.

5. Subjects, Atoms and Ones

As regards the question of whether the particularity of the indivisibles in the category of substance is part of Aristotle's classification or characterization thereof, we have seen that the formula which combines article, indefinite pronoun and sort (as in “the indivisible human”) is at one point in the *Categories* used interchangeably with an Aristotelian expression *ta kath' hekasta* which can be used to identify particulars as

³³ My argument envisages restricting our evidence to the *Categories*, and not importing, for example, considerations regarding the relation between an individual human such as Socrates and his essence from *Metaphysics* Zeta, whose application here seems highly disputable. Still, one might worry about “by the same token”: after all, the relations in question are different. My thought is this: based on the *Categories* alone, the motivation for the stripping exercise would seem to be that the accidents inherent in an individual have a place elsewhere in the categories schema and should therefore be removed from the item located in the primary substance category. By parity of reasoning, then, those features that are said of the individual should be stripped away also, since they too have a location elsewhere in the scheme (“above”, as it were). But stripping both sorts of features would seem to leave us with nothing or with a quality-less substratum. Since neither of these options seems a good interpretation of what the *Categories* has in view as a primary substance, I conclude that no stripping should take place.

such, and can also be used to identify more specific types. It remains to consider the characterizations which individuals in the category of substance share with the non-substantial individuals whose status is disputed. These characterizations are three: (i) being said of no subject (*kat' oudenos hupokeimenou legetai*); (ii) being indivisible (*atoma*); and (iii) being one in number (*hen arithmôî*) (*Cat* 1b6–7).

Regarding (i) being said of no subject:

Duerlinger 1970, 183 points to the distinction between universal and particular, drawn in *de Interpretatione* ch. 7, quoted above, for an understanding of the characterization of indivisibles as “not being said of a subject”. In *de Interpretatione* 7, a universal is identified as “what is such as to be predicated of many things” (17a39–40) (the verb is *katêgoreisthai*). M. Frede [1978] 1987, 55, however, has drawn attention to an important difference between the two passages. The definition of a universal in *de Interpretatione* 7 uses the general idea of one thing being predicable of another, and not the narrower relation that is used in the *Categories* for being said of something *as a subject*. As Frede points out, the *de Interpretatione* definition allows for the possibility that there might be no subjects of predication that are properties, since it might be the case that every property is predicated, not of other properties, but of substances alone. In the *Categories*, by contrast, indivisible properties are properties of which other properties are said as subject. This difference also means that the *de Interpretatione* passage cannot be used to establish that, when the *Categories* characterizes indivisibles as not being said of a subject, it means to appeal to a technical Aristotelian contrast between particular and universal.

Frede proposes that the relation of being said of a subject is the converse of the Platonic relation of participation, understood as being cashed out in, for example, the *Philebus* by the division of a genus into some definite number of species and the further division of these species into some indefinite number of individuals (M. Frede [1978] 1987, 56–57). The distinction that the *Philebus* draws (at *Philebus* 16d6) between the one, the many and the unlimited is, to my mind, yet another instance in which there would be merit in exploring whether and to what extent Plato has *particulars* as such in view, though I shall not pursue this question here. However, whatever may be the truth about Plato, Frede’s Platonic parallel for Aristotle is important, I think. I will come back to it.

Regarding (ii) being indivisible:

atomon, “atomic”, too, is a term best understood against the backdrop of (Aristotle’s engagement with) Platonic division. Thus, in *Posterior Analytics* II.5, Aristotle argues that the method of definition cannot demonstrate definitions. In considering how to remedy the deficiencies of the method in this respect, Aristotle proposes that:

It is possible to solve the difficulties if you assume everything in what the thing is, make the division consecutive by postulating what is primitive, and leave nothing out. [This is necessary if everything falls into the division and nothing is omitted; and this is necessary—for it must be atomic (*atomon*).] (*An. Post.* 91b28–32, tr. Barnes)

The passage involves a textual crux, and Barnes proposes seclusion of the entire second sentence, suggesting that “some intelligent reader, acquainted with B13”, where the proposed solution is more fully developed, “jotted it into his margin, whence it crept into the text” (Barnes [1993] 1999, 211). But Barnes’s intelligent reader surely had good grounds for using the term *atomon* (atomic) in this Platonically-inspired context (as Barnes would not deny). Consider, for example, *Posterior Analytics* II. 13, where Aristotle offers a way to test whether or not we have got hold of an essence or not, the essence of being three in number, for example.

Then if it holds of nothing other than atomic triplets (ταῖς ἀτόμοις τριάσι), it will be what being a triplet is—take us, further, to be supposing that the essence of something is the last such predication to hold of the atoms (*atomois*). (96b10–13, tr. Barnes)

These *Analytiks* contexts suggest that the term *atomon* (atomic) has a background in Aristotle’s reflections on Platonic division, and show that the term can be used by Aristotle to identify *particular* individuals (the atomic triplets, for example). This same context shows that, like the expression *to kath’ hekaston*, the term can be applied to universal items higher up the division tree. So, in *Posterior Analytics* II.13, Aristotle goes on to say that:

When you are dealing with some whole (*holon ti*), you should first divide the kind (*dielein to genos*) into what is atomic in form [or perhaps, species] (*ta atoma tōi eidei*) (e.g. number into triplet and pair).³⁴ (96b15–17, tr. Barnes, bracketed alternative mine)

³⁴ Especially by comparison with the next passage cited, one might expect the phrase “atomic in form [or species]” to pick out not the *infima species*, but the particular

And elsewhere, in *Metaphysics* V.10, 1018b5–6, in the course of explaining what is involved in being “different in species” (*hetera tōi eidei*), Aristotle gives the example of human and horse as things “indivisible in genus (*atoma tōi genei*), though their *logoi* differ”.

The evidence that the term *atomon* (“atomic”) can turn up in contexts on both sides of the particular-universal divide need not raise doubt as to the meaning of the occurrence in the *Categories* context. This seems put beyond doubt by an important *Topics* parallel. As has often been noted, the *Topics* is the Aristotelian work most parallel in thought and in language to the *Categories*.³⁵ In *Topics* IV.1, Aristotle explains how one may test a candidate identification of the genus of some item by considering whether or not the item in question can partake of any of the species of the candidate genus. To illustrate his point, Aristotle explains that “the indivisibles (*ta atoma*) too partake of the genus and of the species”, which he illustrates with the *Categories*-style example: “for example, the indivisible human (*ho tis anthrōpos*) has a share both of human and animal”.

The term *atomon*, then, like the term *kath’ hekaston*, can be used to pick out particulars as such, though it can also be used in different contexts for things that are universal, and not particular.

Regarding (iii) being one in number:

Like both *atomon* and *to kath’ hekaston* the term *hen*, “one”, taken on its own, can be used to characterize things that are universal as well as particular in character. So, for example, in *Metaphysics* VII.8 Aristotle makes the claim that, in natural generation, when “human generates human”, what generates and what is generated are “of the same sort, but not the same thing; not one in number (*hen arithmōi*), but one in [species or form] (*tōi eidei*)” (1033b30–32). Here, Aristotle seems to reserve *hen arithmōi*, “one in number”, for the numerical identity of a thing with itself and *hen tōi eidei*, “one in *eidos*”, for being united under some common kind.³⁶

individuals falling under it. But here, I think, the phrase is a periphrastic way of picking out the species itself.

³⁵ See e.g. M. Frede [1983] 1987, 11–28.

³⁶ In fact, the relation between the expression *hen arithmōi* and *identity* is complicated by questions about whether or not Aristotle is concerned with *identity* and if so, in what way and how. See discussion in Spellman 1995 §II, with bibliographical references to other authors.

Of course, being numerically identical need not be the preserve of things metaphysically particular. But there is evidence that, when Aristotle identifies things as being one in number, in contexts where, as in the *Categories*, this ascription is made quite generally (that is, not in ascriptions of the form “A and B are one in number”), it is metaphysically particular items that he has in mind. One star example comes from an admittedly difficult passage in *Metaphysics* III.4, on the question of whether the *archai* or principles of things could be one in number, which uses the terminology of the *de Interpretatione*’s technical distinction between universal and particular. Aristotle says:

To say “one in number” (*arithmôî hen*) differs not at all from “particular” (*to kath’ hekaston*), because by “particular” (*to kath’ hekaston*) we mean “one in number” (*to arithmôî hen*), and by “universal” (*katholou*) what is set over these (*to epi toutôn*). (999b33–1000a1)

Let me sum up the results of this linguistic investigation.³⁷ In the *Categories*, Aristotle uses three expressions to characterize substantial indivisibles, expressions that, since they are also used of non-substantial indivisibles, it seems reasonable to take to characterize their indivisibility as such. These three expressions are: (i) being “said of no subject”; (ii) being “indivisible” or “atomic”; and (iii) being “one in number”. A survey of Aristotle’s use of these expressions reveals that, although (i) the characterization of substantial indivisibles as not being said of a subject need not be a technical expression for identifying things that are metaphysically particular in character, the expressions (ii) “indivisible” or “atomic” (*atomon*) and (iii) “one in number” (*hen arithmôî*) can be used as apparently technical expressions to identify particulars as such; and that there is reason to think that they are being so used in our *Categories* passage. In this respect, the expressions “indivisible” or “atomic” (*atomon*) and “one in number” (*hen arithmôî*) are comparable to the expression *to kath’ hekaston* mentioned previously, and to which, in the evidence surveyed, each of “indivisible” and “one in number” has been linked. Each of this latter group of expressions can be used, in different contexts, to pick out items either universal or particular. Nevertheless, when used of particulars, the terms seem to be used to indicate that they are *particulars*.

³⁷ Note for readers without Greek: if the linguistic evidence of this section has been hard to follow, this paragraph should convey enough of the take-home message to carry you through the rest of the paper.

6. Drawing Conclusions

I have argued that, in line with consensus, there is reason to think that indivisibles in the category of substance are metaphysically particular items. And I have argued that there is reason to think that the characterization of these indivisibles as being both “indivisible” or “atomic” and “one in number” is indeed a characterization of them *as* metaphysically particular.

Given that these characterizations are also applied to the non-substantial indivisibles whose status is subject to the dispute from which I began, in talking about Aristotle, this means I have evidence on the side of those who maintain that these non-substantial individuals are themselves also metaphysically particular items.³⁸ In part for these reasons, in work on this paper, I have come to be persuaded that this is the case. Nevertheless, it is not part of my purpose to attempt to settle this dispute (and I doubt the evidence I have offered would be likely to do so on its own). The conclusions I wish to draw are independent of this dispute. These conclusions go back to the narrow historical question set up in section 1: the question whether and how Plato and Aristotle distinguish particular from universal and, if they do so, what conception of particularity emerges from the contrast they draw. In section 2, I offered reasons to narrow this question down further to concentrate on Aristotle, specifically on Aristotle’s *Categories*.

This narrowness of focus on Aristotle’s *Categories* may, in retrospect, seem problematic in one particular respect. After all, as I have mentioned, Aristotle does formulate what seems clearly to be a distinction between particular and universal in *de Interpretatione* 7 (17a38–17b1). Why then, one might ask, have I not been more concerned with this passage in its own right? The reason is that this passage says no more than that there is such a distinction; its explication of the distinction does not offer any positive conception of particulars as such. Here, a particular is simply defined by what it is not; it is not a universal, not something such as to be predicated (*katêgoreisthai*) of a plurality of things. In the *Categories*, by contrast, as I have argued, there is positive characterization

³⁸ It is important to note that the non-substantial individuals are not *separately* so characterized (so that the availability of the expressions to characterize non-particular items would make this inference problematic); individuals of both sorts are, in one and the same passage, *together* so characterized (*Cat* 1b6–7).

of particulars as such, in terms of indivisibility and numerical unity.³⁹ Nevertheless, the *de Interpretatione*'s distinction is important, insofar as it raises certain complications as to whether and how we can use the *Categories*'s characterization of particulars to give positive content to Aristotle's notion of the sort of particularity that distinguishes particular from universal.

The complications are these. As has been noted, M. Frede ([1978] 1987, 55) rightly points out that the *Categories*'s contrast between being said of a subject and not being said of a subject is not the same as the *de Interpretatione*'s contrast between universal and particular; between being predicated of many things and not being so predicated. Related to this, the *Categories*'s passage does not itself seem to be concerned to draw the distinction between universal and particular. This is because, if the evidence I have presented is persuasive, particulars turn up not in one, but in *two* locations in the fourfold division the *Categories* gives us; and, further, in the *Categories*, the *differences* between the items in these two locations are just as important as anything they have in common. Indeed, it would seem that the differences must be *more* important, since the *Categories* makes a point of the difference between individuals in the category of substance and *everything* else (e.g. 2b5–6).

The fact that particulars turn up in two locations in the *Categories*'s fourfold division is not itself an obstacle to proceeding; although it is not a class that Aristotle shows himself concerned to isolate for consideration, particulars do, nevertheless, form a unitary class insofar as they are the ultimate subjects of the *Categories*'s said-of-a-subject relation, ultimate insofar as they are not themselves in turn said of anything as subject. Given, however, the difference between the *Categories*'s said-of-a-subject relation and the *de Interpretatione*'s predicated-of-many relation, can the *Categories*'s positive characterizations of the class of particulars provide any answer to the question of what kind of particularity is involved in Aristotle's distinction of universal from particular?

It can, depending on what one takes to be the relation between the *Categories*'s said-of-a-subject relation and the *de Interpretatione*'s predicated-of-many relation. One possibility is that the *Categories*'s said-of-a-subject relation is itself a (distinct) way of drawing the particular-universal

³⁹ "Indivisibility" (*a-tomos*), being a privation, is formally negative, but it is a positive characterization in the sense that it potentially gives content to the notion of particularity, in its own right.

contrast.⁴⁰ In this case, the *Categories*'s characterization of particulars does indeed give content to (an) Aristotelian notion of the particularity involved in the contrast between particular and universal. A second possibility is that the *Categories* said-of-a-subject is a species of the *de Interpretatione* relation.⁴¹ In this case, although the subjects of the *Categories* relation will themselves be particulars (in addition) of the *de Interpretatione* relation, it will be unclear whether their positive characterization in the *Categories* ascribes to them the sort of particularity that distinguishes particular from universal or ascribes to them a different sort of particularity specific to the narrower relation.

If the *Categories* does provide a positive characterisation of the sort of particularity that Aristotle takes to distinguish a particular from a universal, this notion of particularity seems importantly weak. This point is connected to M. Frede's observation of the relation between Aristotle's said-of-a-subject relation and Platonic division ([1978] 1987). In Aristotle's *Categories*, particulars emerge by a continuation of the very same process that produces species from genera. Thus, in *Categories* 3, Aristotle makes explicit that the "said of as subject" relation is transitive:

When one thing is predicated of another as of a subject (*heteron kath' heteron katêgorêtai hôs kath' hupokeimenou*), all the things that are said of what is being predicated will be said of the subject also. For example, human is predicated [sc. as of a subject] of the individual human, and animal of human, so animal will also be predicated [sc. of a subject] of the individual human, because the individual animal is both human and animal. (1b10–15)

The process of moving from genera to species to individual is a process of increasing specification as one moves down a division tree, differentiating as one goes. This is the reason why so much of the terminology involved—indivisible or atomic (*atomon*), "one" (*hen*), and, in other contexts *kath' hekaston*—can turn up at more than one point in the process, and hence, can be ascribed both to things that are universal and to the end points of the process, the particulars. The result is that Aristotle's "particular generator"—if I may put it this way—involves simply further application of a process that, elsewhere, does not result in the differentiation

⁴⁰ This seems to be the view of Lowe 2005, who develops and recommends his own 'four category ontology' as a development of one possible interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories*. Crucially, for Lowe, in such an ontology the particular-universal distinction must not be conflated with the object/property distinction (Lowe 2005, 70).

⁴¹ This is clearly the view of M. Frede [1978] 1987, 55.

of particulars from universals. This, I think, *may* be what Frede had in mind, when he describes the notion of individual that Aristotle has in the *Categories* as being “peculiarly weak” ([1978] 1987, 63).⁴²

The point may be illustrated by a possible parallel in Plato. Take a popular understanding of the method that is described in a notoriously obscure fashion in Plato's *Philebus* 16c10–e2, in which faced with some entity for investigation (local examples are: vocal or musical sound, pleasure and knowledge), the procedure for investigation is first to secure the original one; then, after this, to search (it would appear, respecting this one) for two or whatever other number it turns out to be (or involve); then to do the same, respecting each of these ones (the number discovered), until, having established the exact number of the original one, one “lets each of them go into the unlimited” (16e1–2). According to a popular understanding, the one and the many in view here are the genera, on the one hand, and the species and subspecies, on the other; and the unlimited are the unlimited number of particulars that fall under the various species.⁴³

Now Plato has sometimes been accused in this connection of being confused about the difference between class-inclusion and class-membership, for making a single process continue across the boundary between relations between class-like entities (the species and genus) and the relation between a class-like entity (the species) and the individuals that fall under it. But it seems to me this criticism can be turned on its head. To just the extent that Plato is focused on the process of differentiating as a *uniform* process that terminates in the unlimited, we ought to be asking ourselves what he sees *in common* across boundaries that we ourselves might be inclined to impose. And to the extent that a similar criticism

⁴² This despite M. Frede's self-identification on Owen's side of the debate about non-substantial individuals ([1978] 1987, 57). I share the view of Heinaman 1981, 306, n. 1 that it is difficult to see quite how Frede's and Owen's views line up. In particular, although Frede explicitly allows that “nothing prevents individual properties from having a multitude of individual subjects” ([1978] 1987, 62), his main focus is not this, but the fact that individual properties are “not peculiar to the individuals whose properties they are; they are shared, at least, by the genera and species of the individuals” (*ibid.*).

⁴³ This, I take it, is the understanding of Plato underlying M. Frede's identification of Aristotle's “said of as subject” relation as the converse of the Platonic relation of participation, though there is no explicit commitment to it as an interpretation of Plato ([1978] 1987, 57). For this interpretation of Plato, see, for example, D. Frede 1993, xx–xxx. For my money, this is another context in which the question of whether and to what extent Plato has *particulars* in view is an open question, but not one I shall be addressing in this context. I take the popular understanding *exempli gratia*.

might be raised against Aristotle's said-of-as-subject relation, the same response can be applied. But this means that we should resist the idea that the step that is taken from the universal to particular is one that marks some boundary that is fundamental for the Aristotelian relation in view.

Let me come at the weakness idea from another direction. Emerging from the bottom of a Platonic style division, as the result of a repeated and uniform process of differentiation, the particulars of Aristotle's *Categories* emerge at precisely the point at which the differences between things are no longer salient for the purpose at hand. This, I think, is the reason why his use of the homogenizing expression *ho tis anthrôpos*, "the individual human", is both appropriate and important. I have argued that his use of this expression is indeed a way of picking out those particular human beings, any one of which could, in another context, be picked out by a proper name, and that the particular humans so picked out are human beings "warts and all". Nevertheless, as I have also argued, Aristotle chooses a way of picking them out that is specifically designed to pick out *no one* of these particular individuals *in particular*.

This makes clear the answer that emerges from consideration of these passages of Aristotle regarding the notion of particularity required for a distinction between universal and particular that could emerge from Aristotle's *Categories*. The notion of the particularity of particular as distinct from universal that could emerge from Aristotle's *Categories* is quite different from the sort of particularity that would be in focus if one were addressing the problem of individuation. The particularity of the particulars of Aristotle's *Categories* is one according to which the differences between one particular and another are not at all salient. Contrast this with a view according to which the differences between things are hailed as the *source* of their particularity. Or again, it is, of course, true that the particulars of Aristotle's *Categories* can be counted; each is explicitly identified as being "one in number". But Aristotle seems to have no interest at all in the question of what makes it the case that it is *this one* I am counting.

Connected with this is the fact that the *Categories* shows no interest in and has no obvious answer to the question of what *makes* a particular the particular it is; the problem of individuation. The particularity of particulars in the non-substantial categories is often held to have an explanation; such particularity is generally held to be parasitic on the particularity of individuals in the category of substance. But this is a view that has to be supplied and depends in part upon how one interprets the

obscure explanation of the relation of being in a subject at *Cat* 1a24–25 I mentioned before.⁴⁴ Even if this were right, this latter particularity is nowhere explained. Nor is it clear how it could be explained. Places and times cannot be the source of particularity in a *Categories* context, since places and times depend on particular substances, like everything else. In other Aristotelian contexts, the possibility that matter or form may be “particularizers” is the subject of another, long-standing interpretative dispute. But there is no mention of matter or form in the *Categories* context, and no consensus as to how much is different in the works in which these candidates come into view.

To conclude: particulars, identified as such, are to be found in the *Categories*. The particularity of such particulars can, under certain assumptions, be taken to distinguish them from universals. However, the conception of their particularity that emerges from their characterization in the *Categories* provides no basis for distinguishing one particular from another. In Aristotle's *Categories*, then, the two metaphysical contexts in which there is talk of particularity seem unrelated, insofar as the understanding of particularity involved in one (the distinction of particular from universal) carries no implication for the understanding of particularity sought in the other (the distinction of particular from particular in the problem of individuation). Nevertheless, given the prominent place of the *Categories* in the history of Western philosophy, it seems very likely that its conception of particularity plays some complicating role in the evolution of competing conceptions of particularity as they emerge in both metaphysical contexts.⁴⁵

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⁴⁴ The point is a focus of M. Frede [1978] 1987, 57–59.

⁴⁵ Versions of this paper were presented at the 7th Keeling Colloquium on Particulars, held at University College London in November 2007; at a conference on Metaphysics in the Aristotelian Tradition, at University of Western Ontario in October 2008; and at a Faculty Lunch Seminar of the Philosophy Department at Yale University.

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CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICULARS, SELVES AND
INDIVIDUALS IN STOIC PHILOSOPHY

CHRISTOPHER GILL

1. *Introduction*

The aim of this discussion is to form a clearer view about the place and importance of the idea of particularity in Stoic philosophy, especially particularity as linked with selfhood or individuality. This is a rather broad aim, which needs to be specified more carefully. I do so, in the first instance, by identifying some ways of approaching this topic that I am *not* pursuing here. I will not be trying to define the status of particulars in Stoic metaphysics or epistemology with a view to seeing how far this informs Stoic thinking about identity and provides what we might regard as a theory of *personal* identity. Put differently, that project would be to see how far Stoic metaphysical thinking on the status of particulars leads to the formation of a concept of unique personal particularity or individuality.¹ Rather closer to my concerns is the project of considering how far we should attribute ethical particularism to Stoic theory (a topic often discussed in connection with Aristotelian theory). This question has been raised especially in connection with rules and rule-following in Stoic ethics; and the debate has centred, in effect at least, on the question whether Stoic ethical thinking expresses a type of particularism or universalism.² However, this is still not quite the question I want to pursue. I pose a different, and in a sense prior, question. This is whether particularity is an important notion in Stoic ethical theory at all. Where, if at all, does the idea of particularity—or the contrast between particularity

¹ For some relevant comments, see (from different standpoints), Sorabji 2006, 83–85, Gill 2006, 66–73 (also LS 28: LS = Long and Sedley 1987; references are to sections and passages).

² See especially Inwood 1999, arguing for a particularist type of interpretation of Stoic thought on rules and reasoning, and reviewing alternative views.

and universality—fit within the dominant concepts and categories of Stoic ethics? It seems to me that we need to be clear about the answer to this question before we can determine how far Stoic ethics expresses a form of particularism.

For this purpose, I focus on two aspects of Stoic theory—or at least two features of our evidence for Stoic theory—where it has seemed plausible to think that particularity *is* an important notion in Stoicism. One aspect is Stoic, or more precisely Chrysippean, thinking on the therapy of emotions. There is some evidence that has led scholars, including Martha Nussbaum and Richard Sorabji, to think that Chrysippus' therapy was in some respects highly particularised, and that it responded to the particularity of the people at whom the therapy was directed. I will look closely at the main relevant passage, and consider its probable place in the theory, and see how far this bears out the suggestion that particularity was an important idea in this area of Stoic thought. The second aspect is perhaps better known. In Book One of Cicero's *On Duties* (*de Officiis*), in a section generally regarded as good evidence for the thinking of the second-century Stoic Panaetius, we find a theory of four roles (*personae*) (1.107–121). The first two roles are our universal or common nature as human beings and our specific nature as individuals; so the ideas of particularity and universality are to this degree an explicit part of the theory. Also, within Cicero's account of the theory, there is one passage especially which has been taken (by Sorabji again) to give ethical weight to individual particularity, by contrast with universality, namely the passage dealing with Cato's suicide (1.112). Again, I want to consider how far the passage, taken in its intellectual context, as far as we can reconstruct this, bears out the claim that particularity is being given special weight here.

In considering these two aspects of Stoic theory, I have in view at least two larger questions. Both questions centre on the issue how different conceptual frameworks map on to each other. One is the question why we should suppose that the idea of particularity (as it bears on these topics) should be an important one in Stoic theory. What reason do we have, either with reference to the key normative ideas of the theory or of the Hellenistic-Roman thought-world, to suppose that particularity would be important in these areas of their thought? In posing this point, I am assuming that, if we raised this question in modern Western thought, and made it clear that our concern was with the particularity of individual persons, a number of possible answers would be available. The idea that particularity, in the form of unique individuality or selfhood,

is an important one, ethically or psychologically or in both respects, is a highly familiar one in modern philosophy and, more broadly, in modern Western culture. This idea has been linked with the emergence of certain prominent and distinctive themes of modern thought, including that of the person (or 'subject') as the locus of a uniquely 'first-personal' view or that of individual autonomy as in some sense foundational for moral judgement and experience. It is possible to identify philosophical ideas and traditions, at least since Descartes and Kant, which have promoted the formulation of this idea, as well as provoking debate about its implications and significance. Underlying this idea, arguably, is the conviction, which forms part of Christian thought, that each individual person, or soul, is an object of special concern to God.³ But it is much less obvious, I think, what features of Stoicism, or its contemporary thought-world, would lead the Stoics to treat this idea (the particularity of individual persons) as an especially important one. Of course, one possible answer might be that the metaphysical status of particulars in Stoicism produced this outcome. But I see no clear indication that Stoic thinkers did draw this inference or that they linked these two areas of enquiry; this is my main reason for not taking up here the metaphysical status of particulars in Stoicism. Hence, if we conclude that the aspects of the Stoic theory considered here give substantive importance to the idea of particularity, we have the further job of trying to explain why this should be so.

The second general question I have in view relates not just to particularity but to the contrast between particularity and universality. In modern moral theory, this contrast, and the related contrast between ethical universalism and particularism, is a familiar one. There are a number of well-marked features of modern moral theory that make this contrast an important one. The most obvious feature is the Kantian idea that moral principles are by definition universalisable. But, as I have suggested elsewhere, there is a more general tendency in modern ethical theory to see objectivity as tied to universality, in a range of types of theory including those based on ideas about rights, especially human rights, and on the maximisation of benefits.⁴ On the other hand, there are also modern

³ See further Gill 1996, 6–13, 127–128, 334–340, 403–422; 2006, 331–341, focusing on the links between modern ideas about individuality and subjectivity. See also Gill 2008b; Taylor 1989 is a famous study of the history of modern ideas about individuality.

⁴ That is, theories couched in a Kantian and Utilitarian mode: see Gill 2005, 16–19. Parfit 1984, a famous modern ethical study, exemplifies in a strong form the idea that the

theories that argue, partly in reaction against the universalistic tendency just noted, that moral decisions should be made in a way that refers primarily to the specific features of the situation—including the individual character of those involved—an approach sometimes characterised as moral particularism.⁵ But it is much less clear that the contrast between universality and particularity, or between universalism and particularism, is equally important in ancient ethical theory, or indeed in modern versions of virtue-ethics. Of course, since this contrast is familiar to us moderns, we can apply it to what seem to be appropriate aspects of ancient ethical theory, as has been done in the scholarly debate about the way ideas such as natural law were deployed in Stoicism.⁶ But it does not follow from this that—if we take account of the categories used explicitly by the ancient theories—the universality–particularity contrast does have the same importance that it has in at least some modern moral theories.⁷ So, again, if we maintain that this contrast is important in Stoic ethical theory, we need to explain how the contrast relates to other, more obviously central and explicit, features of Stoic thought. As already indicated, the contrast does seem to form part of the four-*personae* theory in Cicero's *On Duties*; and this raises the question, pursued later, how the universal-particular contrast relates to other, more central, Stoic ideas, including that of goodness as 'consistency' or structured wholeness.

2. *The Place of Particularity in Two Stoic Theories*

Although I have raised these general questions, I will focus for most of this discussion on more middle-distance or localised points, though these will be examined in the light of these larger conceptual issues. As well as considering the place of particularity, or the particularity–universality contrast, in Stoic theory, I want also to explore its place in specific Stoic treatises, as far as we can reconstruct these. I have two rea-

maximisation of benefits should be conceived in a universalistic way, without reference to individual particularity (his argument includes a denial of the validity of standard modern ways of thinking about individual particularity and individuality).

⁵ See e.g. Hooker and Little 2000.

⁶ See n. 2 above, on Inwood 1999.

⁷ Cf. the approach adopted in Gill 2005, where I argue that the idea of universality figures as significant in ancient thought but in connection with the idea of knowledge-based virtue, which is the key ancient category in this context.

sons for pursuing this line of approach, despite its inevitably speculative character. One is that studying the structure of Stoic treatises highlights the main explicit lines and themes of their theory, and thus helps us to locate particularity, or universality, more securely in that context. The other is that study of the two treatises most relevant for this topic brings out certain suggestive points of similarity and contrast between the treatises, which also serve as significant pointers towards the ideas that are important for the theory (or theories) involved. This line of approach has also been suggested by Teun Tieleman's (2003) meticulous and pioneering work in reconstructing the organisation and main lines of argument of Chrysippus' *On Passions* or *On Emotions* (*Peri pathōn*)—the first attempt to do this with a treatise of Chrysippus, as far as I am aware. As regards the other main relevant treatise for this topic, Cicero makes it plain that the first two books of *On Duties* are based on, though not simply translated from, Panaetius' *On Appropriate Acts* (*Peri kathēkontōn*);⁸ so Cicero's work offers at least broad indications of the structure and thematic emphases of another Stoic treatise. These two Stoic treatises (those of Chrysippus and Panaetius) are, of course, on different, though related, topics, and derive from different thinkers. But certain, reasonably firm, conclusions are suggested by comparison between them, which bear directly on the question how to locate particularity (or the particularity-universality contrast) within the main lines of the theoretical approaches set out in the treatises. These conclusions about the structure of the treatises also provide a basis for interpreting specific passages involving particularity.

First of all, what follows from a general comparison between the overall structure of both treatises? In both works, it would seem, the first book is dominated by a full-scale analysis of the central category for the respective topics—that of the virtues in *On Appropriate Acts* and that of the passions in *On Passions*. More precisely, the topic seems to have been definition of the virtues as a four-fold set (wisdom, justice, magnanimity, and temperance understood as *decorum*) in Panaetius' *On Appropriate Acts* and definition of the passions as another four-fold set (appetite, pleasure, fear and distress) in Chrysippus' *On Passions*.⁹ Whatever the other implications of this parallel, it underlines the idea that the passions are in some sense the inverse of the virtues, or at least that they are the

⁸ Cic. *De Officiis* (*Off.*) 1.6, 9, 2.60, 3.7–10.

⁹ Cic. *Off.* 1.18–151, Tieleman 2003, 325 (on the evidence in Galen's *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* (*PHP*) and Cicero's *Tusculans*. (*Tusc.*) for Book 1 of *On Passions*).

result of our failure to achieve the virtues.¹⁰ Book Two of Chrysippus' *On Passions* gives a central place, in Tieleman's reconstruction, to problem cases (*aporiai*), that is, to cases where the main features of the theory (for instance, its strongly cognitive view of emotions) appear to have difficulty in explaining the phenomena of emotional experience, a line of enquiry developed in Posidonius' treatment of this theme.¹¹ There is no obvious analogue for this topic in Cicero's *On Duties* 1–2 (which are presented as based on Panaetius' treatise); but Book 3 of Cicero's treatise takes up problems that arise in attempting to apply the Stoic theory to ethical action. Cicero explores the problems that arise when honourable (virtuous) and beneficial actions appear to conflict, a topic he says Panaetius recognised as worth pursuing but failed to discuss in his treatise.¹² So problems (*aporiai*) deriving from the theory, or from the attempt to correlate the theory with lived experience, may be seen as a second structural theme in both types of treatise.¹³ Book 4 of Chrysippus' treatise, which has no obvious analogue in Panaetius' work, is the so-called 'therapeutic' (or 'ethical') book. The core topic of this book seems to have been the comparison of the passions to physical illness and of philosophical therapy to medical treatment; but Chrysippus also discussed questions about the application of his therapeutic method that have a special relevance for the present question.¹⁴

What follows from this—clearly very general—comparison between the two treatises for the present enquiry? One point, obvious perhaps but not therefore trivial, is that particularity (or, more precisely, the universality-particularity contrast) does not figure as a central, explicit, organising concept in the treatises. Indeed, quite a lot of work would be needed to determine how relevant the contrast is to the main explicit categories (for instance, those of the virtues and passions). This marks a difference, as suggested earlier, from at least some modern theories, where this contrast is more obviously relevant. However, it would appear that particularity (and in one case at least, the particularity-universality con-

¹⁰ On the status of the passions in Stoic ethical theory, see Graver 2007, ch. 2, also Brennan 2003, 269–275.

¹¹ Tieleman 2003, 325–326, referring esp. to Gal. *PHP* 4.7.1–17 (refs to this work are to the books, chapters and paragraphs found in De Lacy 2005), Cic. *Tusc.* 3.61–64; see further Tieleman 2003, 122–132, 250–264.

¹² Cic. *Off.* 1.9–10, 3.7–10.

¹³ I am assuming, then, that Cicero is following a recognised pattern in Stoic treatises, even if Panaetius did not actually complete his work according to this pattern in the case of *peri kathēkontōn*.

¹⁴ On the probable structure of Book 4, see Tieleman 2003, 326, also his ch. 4.

trast) does figure as a subordinate strand within the two treatises.¹⁵ But, on this point, an interesting contrast emerges between the two treatises. The scope for particularity in Chrysippus' *On Passions* is relatively limited and marginal to the main theory; the theme figures there (in so far as it does figure) in connection with the application of Stoic therapy to people with differing beliefs. The theme of particularity, and also of the universal-particular contrast, is more integral to Panaetius' theory, and is embodied especially in the ideas of the first and second *personae*. This point of difference seems, at first sight at least, rather striking, and fits in with a rather common scholarly view about Panaetius (that he introduced a more individualising, or at least differentiating, approach into Stoicism).¹⁶ But there is at least one qualification that needs to be made to this impression. This is that, as will be argued later, the main organising theme in the four-*personae* theory, and in the section on *decorum* in which this theory falls is, is the ideal of consistency, and of constituting a coherent and structured whole, a theme that is central for standard Stoic ethics and is not peculiar to Panaetius. My provisional conclusion, then, is that particularity is not as important a theme in Stoic ethics as has sometimes been maintained. In saying this, I am not arguing for a universalist reading of these points; rather, neither category seems to be as crucial as we moderns might expect. But, of course, this conclusion depends on closer study of the main pieces of evidence, to which I now turn.

3. Chrysippus' therapeutic strategy

I begin with some comments by Origen on which a good deal of weight has been placed by those who find a strong focus on particularity in Chrysippus' therapeutic strategy for emotions.

But in my view Chrysippus has acted more humanely than Celsus in his *Therapy of the Passions*; he wishes to cure the passions that press and trouble the human psyche, preferably by means of arguments that seem sound to him but in the second and third instance even by doctrines that he does not hold.

¹⁵ At least, I am assuming this is the case at this stage of the discussion, though I shall suggest later that the importance of particularity is actually very limited in the relevant section of the treatise by Chrysippus.

¹⁶ See e.g. Sorabji 2006, 166, linking the supposed shift with Panaetius' reported focus on those making progress rather than the normative wise person (LS 66 C).

'Even if [the person holds] that there are three kinds of goods, even so the passions have to be cured. But one should not at the moment of the inflammation of passions bother about the doctrine that previously won over the person troubled by the passion. The available therapy should not be wasted at an unsuitable time on overthrowing the doctrines that previously won over the psyche.' He also says, 'Even if pleasure is [thought to be] the good and this is the view taken by the person overwhelmed by the passion, even so he should be helped and it should be shown to him that even for those who consider pleasure to be the good and the goal of life every passion is inconsistent'.¹⁷

The passage has sometimes been taken to support the idea that Chrysippus' therapeutic strategy was particularised and adapted to the individuality of the person concerned. For instance, Nussbaum cites the passage in support of her general thesis in *The Therapy of Desire* that Hellenistic therapeutic arguments are 'value-relative' in that they respond to 'deep wishes or needs of the patient' and that they are 'responsive to the particular case' (the person's 'concrete situation and needs').¹⁸ Sorabji also maintains that the passage shows that 'Chrysippus himself offered to treat the emotions of people who did not accept the fundamental Stoic tenets about what was good, bad, or indifferent'. By implication then, Chrysippus' therapeutic method included responding to the particular belief-set of the person concerned, setting aside Stoic ideas about the nature of what is good or bad.¹⁹

However, if closely examined, I am not sure that the passage really does support the claim that Chrysippus' strategy was particularised in a strong sense.²⁰ What lies behind the passage is a reported difference in therapeutic approach between Chrysippus and his predecessor as head of the Stoic school, Cleanthes. Cleanthes thought that the only effective treatment was to remove the belief that, for instance, death is a bad thing, since this belief underpins the emotional reaction of grief. However, Chrysippus saw the first task as being to remove the belief that it is right or appropriate (*kathēkon*) to react with grief at someone's death (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.76–77). Sorabji stresses the importance of this distinction in approaches in enabling Chrysippus to provide a more personal and, up to a point at least, doctrine-free form of therapy

¹⁷ Origen *Against Celsus* 7.51, second text; translation mine, partly based on Tieleman 2003, 166–167.

¹⁸ Nussbaum 1994, 46 (her italics); see also 318, 378.

¹⁹ Sorabji 2000, 178, also 2, 8.

²⁰ For similar reservations, see Tieleman 2003, 166–170.

for emotions such as grief.²¹ But I do not think we should overstate the significance of this tactical difference between the two Stoic thinkers. Chrysippus' overall, long-term goal was also to remove the beliefs about good and bad that generate the further belief that it is appropriate to react passionately. As outlined earlier, this analysis of the nature of passion is central to Book 1 of Chrysippus' *On Passions*; and Chrysippus' core strategy in Book 4 seems to have been to try to convince people that the passions, understood in this way, were 'sicknesses' and needed to be cured.²² That this was Chrysippus' overall goal is also indicated here in Origen's comment that Chrysippus set out to cure passions 'preferably by means of arguments that seem sound to him'. It is, of course, also said that Chrysippus was prepared to use doctrines he did not hold: but how far do Origen's actual quotations from Chrysippus bear this out?

In the first case (addressed to someone who holds the Aristotelian-style view that there are three kinds of good), we are told simply that Chrysippus did not think it was useful to try to alter his or her beliefs about types of good when the person was inflamed with passion, a sensible observation that we also find elsewhere in our evidence for Chrysippus' theory.²³ However, the comments imply that it is those beliefs that lie at the base of the passion and that at a more suitable time Chrysippus might well tackle those beliefs too. In the second case (addressed to someone who holds the Epicurean-style view that pleasure is the good), there is an explicit reference to the idea of engaging with the person's belief-set, which Chrysippus does not share, and trying to show that on this basis too it is not appropriate to react with passion. Specifically, the approach seems to be to point out that the passionate response, as being, at least partly, painful, is 'inconsistent' (*analogoumenon*) with the pursuit of pleasure as the overall goal. Interestingly, we do know, from evidence in Philodemus (a first-century BC thinker) that Epicureans did hold that at least some passions should be avoided because they were

²¹ See refs in n. 19 above. On the linkage between this point and the two judgements involved in a passion (that *x* is good or bad and that it is appropriate to react in a given way), see Sorabji 2000, 175–178, also Donini 1995, 323–324.

²² On these central aspects of Chrysippus' treatise, see Tieleman 2003, chs. 3 and 4, esp. 142–157. Thus, Chrysippus' theory, taken overall, gives a central role to both kinds of belief. See also Tieleman 2003, 166–170, and Donini 1995, 307–308.

²³ Cic. *Tusc.* 4.78–79 (not explicitly ascribed to Chrysippus); this idea is implied in many Chrysippean comments on passion recorded by Galen, e.g. *PHP* 4.6.24–25, 27, 31, 34.

painful;²⁴ so Chrysippus may have been fastening on a specifically Epicurean view here. On the other hand, the idea that passions expressed a kind of inner inconsistency (a conflict between the 'natural' human state and a temporary non-natural state) is central to the Stoic theory of the passions;²⁵ and the word 'inconsistency' has, in general, strong ethical resonance in Stoicism, as stressed later. So Chrysippus may be appealing here to a point where Stoics and Epicureans have—to some extent—a shared view, and one that distinguishes them from most people.²⁶

Taking these points into account, how far does Origen's evidence support the view that Chrysippus' therapeutic strategy implies recognition of the importance of individual particularity? It does not, I think, offer very strong support. In one case, the Aristotelian, the person's beliefs about good are simply shelved, for later arguments, it seems. In the other case, the Epicurean, there is a more direct engagement with the Epicurean position on good, at least as a preliminary move, though this may be prompted in part by the fact that the two theories have in common a critical view of (at least most) emotions. It is hard to claim, on the basis of this passage, taken in the context of other evidence for the Stoic theory, that very strong weight is being given to the idea of particularity in the form of a response to another person's particular belief-set. The main weight of Chrysippus' strategy seems clearly to fall elsewhere, in presenting in medical terms (as sickness and cure) his revisionist theory of emotions and the proper response to them. In saying this I am not suggesting that Chrysippus' theory is explicitly universalistic, by contrast with particularising. My point is that these notions (universality, particularity) have little grip when juxtaposed closely with the explicit categories of Chrysippus' theory.

²⁴ See e.g. Philodemus *On Anger* 44.5–35; see also Gill 2006, 452–453, Procopé 1998, 178–182.

²⁵ See e.g. LS 65 A(6–8), D(3), J; see further Gill 2006, 249–260. Chrysippus included discussion of at least one passion (anger) in a treatise, *On Inconsistency* (*peri anomologias*); see Plutarch *Moralia* 450C and Tieleman 2003, 180.

²⁶ The question how far Epicurean thinking on emotions should be understood as revisionist (like Stoic ideas), and different from conventional thinking, is rather complex and is actively debated by scholars; for rather different approaches to the question, see Warren 2004, especially chs. 1 and 4 and Armstrong 2008. But there is enough of a *prima facie* resemblance between the two theories on this point for Chrysippus to have thought he had grounds for finding inconsistency in an Epicurean who thought that he should cling on to painful emotions.

4. *The Four-Personae Theory: the Cato Example*

These notions are, obviously, much closer to the categories of the theory of the four *personae* (or 'roles') in Cicero, *On Duties* 1; and the presentation of the Cato example, in particular, has been taken to raise an issue that centres on the moral implications of particularity. But here too I try to locate the topic in what seems to have been its original conceptual framework; and the effect of doing so, I think, is to reduce the impression that the key categories map directly on to those of particularity and universality and to modern philosophical issues linked with those ideas. The four-*personae* theory is introduced as providing a co-ordinated set of reference-points by which we can establish what is *decorum/prepon* (which we might translate as 'just right').²⁷ The first of these *personae* is common (or 'universal', *universa*, 110) to all human beings as such and consists in our shared rationality and capacity for developing the virtues (107). The second is assigned to us as individuals (*proprie singulis*); it is initially presented at least in terms that imply vast variety in ability, inclinations and personal style.²⁸ The main recurrent theme is that we should live in a way that is consistent with both these *personae*, and also, it is added, two other *personae* (our given social situation and the role in life we select), if we are to achieve the quality of *decorum/prepon* that is presented as what we should aim at (110, 115, 120).

Here then, much more clearly than in the evidence for Chrysippus' 'therapeutic' book or *On Passions* generally, the notions of universality and particularity figure as explicit theoretical notions; and this might seem to suggest that the theory maps more straightforwardly on to analogous use of these themes in modern ethical philosophy. Sorabji has argued that this is so in connection with one striking passage, dealing with Cato's suicide.

Indeed, such differences of natures have so great a force that sometimes one man ought to choose death for himself, while another ought not. For surely the case of Marcus Cato was no different from that of the others who gave themselves up to Caesar in Africa? And yet it would perhaps have been counted as a fault if they had killed themselves, for the very reason that they had been more gentle in their lives, and more

²⁷ I owe this useful suggestion to Schofield, forthcoming.

²⁸ See e.g. *in animis ... varietates* ('varieties in mental qualities', 107) and *innumerabiles ... dissimilitudines ... naturae morumque* ('innumerable ... variations ... of nature and character', 109). The text of Cicero's *De Officiis* used here is Winterbottom 1994 (Oxford Classical Text).

easy-going in their behaviour. But since nature had assigned to Cato an extraordinary seriousness, which he himself had consolidated by his unfailing consistency, abiding always by his adopted purpose and policy, it was necessary for him to die rather than look upon the face of a tyrant.²⁹

Sorabji finds in this passage a striking expression of the importance of unique individuality and highlights the contrast with Kant's conception of moral obligation. Whereas Kant sees moral rules as, by their very nature, applying universally, Cicero maintains that Cato's suicide was morally right only for him. Sorabji allows that, in principle, it would also be right for anyone else exactly like Cato to act in the same way in this situation. But '[t]he interesting point is that there *was* no one else like Cato. He had always stood for a kind of austerity that no-one else began to match ... And that is why it would be right for him to commit suicide, but not for the others in the situation that prevailed.'³⁰ In a related discussion, Sorabji adds: 'it was unique to Cato that suicide was the right course, because his character was unique among those defeated here. The interest here is not only in the individual, but in an individual whose character in the situation was unique.'³¹ Clearly, in Sorabji's reading, particularity, in the form of unique individual character, plays a very important role in the theory. And the example illustrates an issue that has clear modern analogues, that is, whether we can argue that unique individuality carries with it inherent moral force, or whether, as Kant claimed, moral principles are necessarily universalisable.

But is Sorabji's reading correct; or has he over-assimilated the passage to modern categories, thus making Cicero, developing the ideas of Panaetius, into a modern-style moral particularist?³² In reflecting on this question, it is useful to refer to the larger context in which the four-*personae* theory is situated, the discussion of the fourth virtue,

²⁹ Cic. *Off.* 1.112. Here and subsequently, the translation of *De Officiis* used is that of Griffin and Atkins 1991, sometimes modified.

³⁰ Sorabji 2006, 159. Sorabji refers to Winch 1965 for the contrast with Kant; on Kant's own reading of this passage, see Sorabji 2006, 165–166.

³¹ Sorabji 2008a, 31. He takes Cicero to be accentuating the point that Cato's uniqueness leads to a uniquely right decision through his use of the words *in eadem causa ... alia in causa* ('in the same situation ... in a different situation', 112).

³² For a related discussion, also expressing reservations about Sorabji's interpretation of the significance of Cic. *Off.* 1.112, see Gill 2008a, 36–45. Sorabji defends his approach against these criticisms in 2008, 4–16, 30–32.

which is a combination of the traditional virtue of self-control (*temperantia/moderatio*) and certain general features associated with the possession of the virtues, linked with the notion of *decorum/prepon*.³³ The presentation of *decorum/prepon* both as an aspect of each of the virtues (and of the virtues as a whole) and also as one of the virtues (namely self-control) (esp. 1.96) is initially puzzling. But the underlying thought, which has parallels elsewhere in Stoic ethics, seems to be that possession of any one virtue means possessing the whole set, since they are unified or inter-entailing. This in turn gives rise to a kind of psychic health or beauty, that supervenes on the possession of the virtues as a unified or inter-entailing set, and ‘shines out’ as a quality of seemliness or ‘just-rightness’ (*decorum/prepon*).³⁴ These are ideas that we find elsewhere associated with the virtues in general in Stoicism.³⁵ Here, these features are especially linked with self-control, perhaps because this virtue is conceived as one that shapes the whole pattern of a person’s motivation and thus makes a special contribution towards virtuous wholeness and the resulting psychic beauty.³⁶ Hence, the dominant normative idea associated with *decorum/prepon* is that of consistency and wholeness. The four-*personae* theory is presented as a further way of defining the nature of the fourth virtue. The main explicit ideas in the passage are those of consistency or wholeness; and consistency is to be achieved by co-ordinating

³³ Cic. *Off.* 1.93–106, esp. 93–96. On the (puzzling or complex) status of this fourth virtue, see Dyck 1996, 239–249 and, for a particularly helpful treatment, see Schofield, forthcoming.

³⁴ See further on this set of ideas in Cic. *Off.*, Philippson 1930, 386–387, Gill 1988, 173–174.

³⁵ See LS 61, esp. D, H, 60 Q, Stobaeus 2.62.18–24, 63.1–5; see further Gill 2006, 154–155.

³⁶ On this virtue, as described elsewhere, see LS 61 D(3), H(2), (8); also Cic. *Off.* 1.93–96, 98, 100. See esp. (95): *ut venustas et pulchritudo corporis secerni non potest a valetudine, sic hoc de quo loquimur decorum totum illud quidem est cum virtute confusum, sed mente et cogitatione distinguitur*. (‘Just as bodily attractiveness and beauty cannot be separated from health, so the just-rightness that we are discussing is indeed completely blended with virtue, but is distinguished by thought and reflection.’); (98) *ut enim pulchritudo corporis apta compositione membrorum movet oculos et delectat hoc ipso, quod inter se omnes partes cum quodam lepore consentiunt, sic hoc decorum quod elucet in vita movet approbationem eorum quibuscum vivitur ordine et constantia et moderatione dictorum omnium et factorum*. (‘Just as the eye is aroused by the beauty of a body, because of the appropriate arrangement of the limbs, and is delighted just because all its parts are in graceful harmony, so this just-rightness, shining out in one’s life, arouses the approval of those around us, because of the order and consistency and moderation of every word and action’).

or harmonising all four *personae* to each other.³⁷ The question which *persona* should have priority in cases of conflict is not formally addressed as a philosophical issue, though Cicero underlines the importance of not struggling against our own natural capacities or inclinations and of not acting in contradiction to our common or universal nature as rational and potentially virtuous animals.³⁸

What are the implications of this point for the question whether, in this discussion, and especially in the treatment of Cato (in 112), universality or individuality function as ethical norms in the way that they sometimes do in modern moral theory? It is clear, first of all, that the overriding norm is neither universality nor particularity but consistency (*constantia*), at least consistency in the exercise of the virtues;³⁹ it is surely not accidental that 'consistency' or 'agreement' was one of the standard ways of characterising the overall goal of life in Stoicism.⁴⁰ Secondly, the pattern assumed is not so much one in which one or other *persona* has priority or assumes independent normative status (although the first *persona* is presented as a limiting factor for the others),⁴¹ but rather the attempt to achieve consistency between all four *personae*. Another relevant background point is that, although Cicero sometimes presents the second *persona* as manifested in a very wide range of characteristics,⁴² in practice he

³⁷ Cic. *Off.* 1.110–111, esp. (111): *omnino si quicquam est decorum, nihil est profecto magis quam aequabilitas universae vitae, tum singularum actionum*. ('If anything at all is just right, nothing surely is more so than an evenness in one's whole life and one's individual actions'); (120) *utriusque [naturae et fortunae] omnino habenda ratio est in deligendo genere vitae, set naturae magis: multo enim et firmior est et constantior ... qui igitur ad naturae suae non vitiosae genus consilium vivendi omne contulerit, is constantiam teneat (id enim maxime decet)*. ('We should generally take account of both [nature and fortune] in choosing a type of life, but of nature more; for it is steadier and more consistent ... When therefore someone has adopted a plan of life entirely in accordance with his nature (if it is not a vicious one) let him maintain consistency, since that most of all is just right.'). See also 114, 116, 119.

³⁸ For the first point, see 110–114, 119–120; for the second, see (end of 109): *minime tamen vituperandorum* ('which, however, are not to be worthy of criticism'); (110): *sua cuique, non vitiosa* ('his own, as far as it is not defective'); *sic enim est faciendum ut contra universam naturam nihil contendamus* ('we must act in such a way that we attempt nothing contrary to universal nature'); (120) *ad naturae suae non vitiosae genus* ('in accordance with his nature [if it is not a vicious one]').

³⁹ See refs. in n. 37 above (also n. 36).

⁴⁰ See LS 63 B, also 59 D(4–5), and 61 A; also Gill 2006, 145–147, 154–159.

⁴¹ See n. 38 above.

⁴² See (107): *in corporibus magnae dissimilitudines ... in animis ... varietates* ('great differences in physical qualities ... variations in mental qualities'); (109): *innumerabiles aliae dissimilitudines sunt naturae morumque* ('innumerable other variations ... of nature and character').

focuses on a single general contrast, namely between rigid or stern and flexible or socially adaptable character-types.⁴³ All these points are relevant to the presentation of the case of Cato in 112. Cato, for one thing, is presented as falling within the rigid or stern character-type (like Ajax in 113) and as representing an exceptional degree of *gravitas* ('seriousness'), by contrast with others whose lives had been *lenior* ('milder') and whose character had been *faciliores* ('more easy-going'). Also, although consistency is the general goal for everyone, Cato is also presented as exceptional *in the consistency* with which he has maintained his natural disposition on a life-long basis.⁴⁴ Hence, his suicide (like that of Ajax in 113) represents a case where *personae* 1 and 2 converge, despite the exceptional character of their characters and responses—because this was a consistent way for these people to reach a justifiable and appropriate end. None of these points perhaps conflict directly with Sorabji's reading of the Cato case, but, taken together (and in conjunction with the discussion of *decorum*),⁴⁵ they suggest that the passage is most plausibly read in the light of a complex of themes in which the most important normative idea is that of consistency, understood as a key Stoic theme, rather than particularity—or the contrast between universality and particularity. Sorabji's account may be seen as a compelling reading of the passage in the light of some modern ethical paradigms, but also as one that maps less readily on to Stoic categories.

I close this discussion by outlining a possible explanation for Panaetius' formulation of the four-*persona* theory, on the assumption that the theory as a whole constitutes an innovation, even though most of the components of the theory derive from earlier Stoic ethics.⁴⁶ Sorabji, on his interpretation of the theory, sees it as reflecting an increasing interest in individuality in the post-Hellenistic period, though he does not, I

⁴³ Cic. *Off.* 107–109; more precisely, we find two related contrasts, between *lepos/hilaritas* ('charm/cheerfulness') and *severitas/gravitas* ('seriousness/weight') and between *calliditas* ('cunning') and *simplicitas* ('directness'); but these two contrasts are similar and interrelated (see Dyck 1996, 272).

⁴⁴ (112) *Catoni cum incredibilem tribuisset natura gravitatem, eamque ipse perpetua constantia roboravisset, semper in proposito susceptoque consilio permansisset.* ('But since nature had assigned to Cato an extraordinary seriousness, which he himself had consolidated by his unfailing consistency, abiding always by his adopted purpose and policy.')

⁴⁵ See text to nn. 33–36 above.

⁴⁶ On the intellectual background of the four-*personae* theory, see Gill 1988, 175–176. Tieleman 2007, 130–140 is sceptical of the idea that there is *anything* new in the theory, but this may go too far.

think, explain this alleged shift by reference to large-scale philosophical or cultural changes.⁴⁷ However, on the rather different interpretation of the theory offered here, an alternative line of explanation seems more plausible. In a book on Hellenistic and Roman thought, I have underlined the importance of a contrast in the period between two different ways of thinking about ethical development, one linked with Platonic and Aristotelian thought and the other with Stoic and Epicurean thought. One salient difference is that, in the Stoic-Epicurean pattern, all human beings are seen as constitutively capable of developing towards complete wisdom and virtue, as this is conceived in the relevant theory. In the Platonic-Aristotelian pattern, by contrast, such development is presented as a dependent on a combination of the right kind of nature, habitative upbringing in the right kind of family or community setting, and the right kind of intellectual education (on the proper combination of *phusis*, *ethos* and *logos*, as it is sometimes put). This difference goes along with a set of related contrasts, for instance, between a unified or holistic (Stoic-Epicurean) and a part-based (Platonic-Aristotelian) psychological theory.⁴⁸

Panaetius, like Posidonius, is presented in some ancient sources as a Stoic who was unusually favourable to Plato and Aristotle.⁴⁹ As Tieleman has argued, convincingly, this probably reflects the fact that both thinkers commented explicitly on Plato and Aristotle, though from a committed Stoic standpoint, more fully than previous Stoic thinkers had done. They may also have highlighted common ground between Stoic theory and Platonic or Aristotelian theory more than earlier Stoics did, but again without surrendering distinctive Stoic principles.⁵⁰ The four-*personae* theory can be seen as part of this process of responding to Platonic-Aristotelian ideas from a Stoic perspective. Panaetius may have conceived the theory, in part at least, as a way of making reference to individual

⁴⁷ Sorabji 2006, 165, linking this theme with Panaetius' shift of focus on to those making progress instead of the sage (Seneca *Epistle* 116.5 and Cic. *Off.* 1.46) and with the increased use of exemplars in later Stoicism; also 166–167 (where these features are presented as typical of early Imperial Stoic ethics).

⁴⁸ See Gill 2006, 132–145, 178–182, 231–232; the contrast is recognised implicitly in Plutarch *Moralia* 443C–444D, and explicitly in Gal. *PHP* 5.5.1–9, *Quod Animi Mores* ch. 11.

⁴⁹ Panaetius frs. 57–59 van Straaten 1962.

⁵⁰ Tieleman 2003, ch. 5 and 2007, 108–116; also Gill 2006, 136–137, 213–214, 281–283. On this contrast between different phases of Hellenistic thought, see also Frede 1999, 774–778, 783–784, and Sedley 2003, 20–24.

nature (in the form of the second *persona*) and to family and social context or role (in the third and fourth *personae*). To this extent he finds room for the ideas linked in the Platonic-Aristotelian account of development with inborn nature (*phusis*) and social habituation (*ethos*). But Panetius does so without giving up the core Stoic claim that ‘all human beings have the starting-points of virtue’ (LS 61 L),⁵¹ a claim embodied in the first, human *persona*, our rationality and capacity for virtue, which is common to all of us.⁵² Possibly too, the reference to a broad two-fold division between character-types (namely, the rigid and flexible) can be seen as an adaptation of certain Platonic two-fold patterns of this kind, for instance, between the vigorous (‘spirited’) and mild (‘moderate’) in the *Statesman*.⁵³ This explanation for the emergence of the four-*personae* theory is, of course, conjectural. But it has the merit of explaining the main distinctive features of Panaetius’ theory in the light of much that we are told about him, but without importing a rather modern-looking interest in individual particularity that is much harder to explain. It also explains why the ideas of universality and particularity—at least in the form in which they are found in the four-*personae* theory—appear more prominently in a Ciceronian work based on Panaetius than in the evidence for Chrysippus’ *On Passions* discussed earlier. In doing so, it helps us to provide a plausible ancient context for ideas which modern assumption encourage us to analyse in terms of the contrast between universality and particularity.

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⁵¹ This claim is supported in standard Stoic theory by the idea that we have an innate capacity for forming (correct) ‘preconceptions’ of ethical concepts and deploying these in our ethical development; see LS 40, esp. S, 60 B–F. See further Gill 2006, 132–133.

⁵² Cic. 1.107, cf. 105–106, and more generally, 100–103.

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CHAPTER FIVE

ON CHRISTOPHER GILL ON “PARTICULARS, SELVES AND INDIVIDUALS IN STOIC PHILOSOPHY”

ANGELA HOBBS

In his stimulating paper, Gill explicitly asks us to consider three main questions in connection with two passages (Origen, *Against Celsus* 7.51 and Cicero, *On Duties* 1.107–121:

- i. Are the two passages, one based on Chrysippus and the other on Panaetius, concerned with moral particularism?
- ii. Are the two passages concerned with the relation between moral particularism and moral universalism?
- iii. Is it, in fact, anachronistic to go searching for such things in the texts?

He also, I believe, implicitly asks us to consider a fourth question:

- iv. Whatever the answers to the above three questions, does modern ethical debate focus too much on moral particularism, and the relation between moral particularism and moral universalism, to the detriment of other themes and ideals, such as constancy and consistency, harmony and wholeness?

To consider these questions, we first need a better understanding of what ‘moral particularism’¹ and ‘moral universalism’ might mean, and for this it will be helpful to give a brief and rough sketch of one popular version of the history of Western ethical thought since the late eighteenth century, a version based on the framework of universalism and particularism.²

¹ Gill (130) follows Hooker and Little (2000) when he claims that in ‘an approach sometimes characterized as moral particularism’, ‘moral decisions should be made in a way that refers primarily to the specific features of the situation—including the moral character of those involved’.

² It is a sketch which mostly disregards metaphysical questions concerning universals and particulars, or possible distinctions between particulars and individuals (let alone between particulars and unique individuals); this is because the adherents of this version

As we shall see, the fact that it is so general and rough is an important part of its point. According to this *mythos*, there emerges in the second half of the eighteenth century a profound hope that universal human reason (configured as such even if many of its advocates do not in practice believe that all humans e.g. women possess it, or possess it fully) can save humanity from the devastating sectarian and political conflicts of the previous 200 years. In Kant, this rational ideal takes the form of the categorical imperative—‘act only on that maxim which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law’—and the universal rules that he argues follow from it, together with a belief in human rights; in Bentham, the rational ideal of maximizing utility is based on the belief that all humans are attracted to pleasure and repelled by pain.

Yet while Kant and Bentham are prescribing universal goals, moral particularist rebellion is stirring the pens of the Romantic poets: a passionate desire to promote and hold on to the value of the unique individual in his or her particular context. Kierkegaard, too, while accepting that morality is universal, believes that this is so much the worse for morality: we should move beyond its limitations and distortions to a religious life which affirms the value of the individual. A similar desire to affirm the individual and particular (though without, of course, the religious framework) later propels Nietzsche to challenge the dominant deontological and utilitarian moralities of the day and modernism is born.³ In varying degrees and in very different ways, the wish to allow at least a role for particularism in ethics continues to manifest itself in many writers and philosophers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. They are an appropriately disparate assortment of bedfellows, including Wittgenstein and his followers with their emphasis on embedded practices; Henry James, Proust, de Beauvoir, Simone Weil, Iris Murdoch and Martha Nussbaum with their pleas for moral attentiveness and sensitivity; feminist proponents of an ethics of care such as Carol Gilligan; and those gener-

of the story do not—or appear not to—think it necessary to attend to such metaphysical questions. Whether this disregard is warranted is one of the many intriguing issues raised by Gill’s paper, though there is not the space to address it here.

³ ‘Every action that has ever been done was done in a unique and irretrievable way ... all regulations about actions relate only to their coarse exterior (even the most inward and subtle regulations of all moralities so far)’ (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 335 trans. Kaufmann). See also *Human, All Too Human* 1.427: ‘This is why the free spirit hates all habits and rules, everything enduring and definitive ...’ (trans. Marion Faber).

ally sceptical about the scope of moral rules, such as Williams, McDowell, Wiggins and Dancy. A number of these writers are explicitly or implicitly indebted to Aristotle's notion of a practical judgement which is sensitive to context and arrives at a mean in action or reaction which is appropriate for the subject (rather than a baldly arithmetical mean), and his belief that, in consequence, a well-run legal system needs equity as well as justice; we shall be returning to this point later, when we come to consider whether it is anachronistic to look for a universalist/particularist debate in Stoic texts. The fact that the term 'moral particularism' is used so widely and disparately will also be important, although there is a generally shared belief that moral judgement should somehow take cognizance of the particular individual, the particular relationship and the particular context.

This oft-repeated tale, of course, is not entirely true, and the reasons why it is not entirely true also matter for our consideration of Gill's paper. No advocate of universal values and rules is entirely indifferent to the claims of the particular: both Kant and Bentham, for example, emphasize the need for moral judgement concerning when and how to apply universal rules and principles. Furthermore, a fairly common charge against Kant's universalizable maxims is that they can be so extended and refined that in practice they might only apply to one particular case: in respect of Gill's second passage, there could even be a maxim that only applied to Cato's suicide.⁴ Nor are there many 'particularists' who think that rules can be abandoned altogether, in all situations.⁵ The debate, then, is not—or should not be—a straightforward contest between moral universalism and particularism; it should take the more nuanced form of how much status and weight to accord universalist and particularist ideals and features.

With this in mind, let us turn to Gill's two passages.

⁴ It is not clear to me that this criticism is fair—if a maxim is so complicatedly refined, can it still be the rule under which one acts?—but for present purposes the germane point is that boundaries between universal and particular in ethics are not always obvious.

⁵ Nietzsche says he thinks this, but it certainly does not prevent him from issuing edicts ('Live dangerously!'; 'What does not kill you makes you stronger!') throughout his works. Amongst contemporary modern particularists, Dancy perhaps comes closest to rejecting the need for rules altogether.

1. *Origen, Against Celsus 7.51*

Gill argues that in this text, in which Origen discusses Chrysippus' *Therapy of the Passions*, we do not, *contra* Nussbaum (1994, 46), find strong support for the claim that Chrysippus believes therapeutic practices should be adapted to the particular nature of the patient. This seems largely correct. According to the first example cited by Origen, Chrysippus only makes the more general point that the therapist needs to take cognizance of how inflamed by passion his patient is: certain arguments will be wasted when the inflammation is at its height (the strong implication is, however, that the same arguments should be saved for a more suitable moment). In Origen's second example, Chrysippus is reported as saying that the Stoic therapist should be prepared to engage with patients who do not hold Stoic views on the good (mistakenly believing, for instance, that the good is pleasure), showing the patient how the passions are inconsistent even with his (misguidedly Epicurean) view, presumably because the passionate response is at least partly painful. Again, however, as Gill rightly notes, Epicureans themselves held that some passions should be avoided because they were painful,⁶ so the Stoic therapist may be happy to engage with a different belief-set only in so far as he and the Epicurean share common ground. In any case, saying that the therapist should adapt his treatment to the particular belief-set of the patient, while interesting and important, is not the same as saying that the therapist should adapt treatment to the particular nature and situation of the individual: there were, after all, many Epicureans who believed pleasure to be the good. There is also the implication again that in the longer term the therapist should try to work towards changing his patient's belief-set so that he, the therapist, can employ 'arguments that seem sound to him,' which Origen states is Chrysippus' preferred method.

Taking cognizance of an inflamed mood and a mistaken belief-set, both of which the patient might share with many others, therefore amounts at best only to a fairly weak form of moral particularism. But this does not mean that a more strongly particularist feature is not at work in the passage. A point that Gill does not highlight is how the therapist must pay attention to the particular time, the *kairos*, at which a particular argument may or may not be appropriate. He does say (135) that 'at a more

⁶ E.g. Philodemus, *On Anger* 44.5–35.

suitable time' Chrysippus might try to change the false beliefs that are giving rise to the inflamed passion, but he does not draw the inference that this supports the interpretation of the passage as providing evidence for moral particularism, albeit not necessarily of a kind focused on the idiosyncracies of individual natures.

2. Cicero, On Duties 1.107–121

Such recognition of individual idiosyncacy, however, is to be found in Gill's second text, in which Cicero discusses a four-*personae* theory generally attributed to Panaetius, arguing that we should live in a way which is harmonious with all four roles if we are to achieve the *decorum* that is our goal. The second of these roles is assigned to us as individuals (*proprie singulis*) and, in theory at least, acknowledges that there are great variations between individuals in abilities, desires, tastes and ways of doing things. Given these differences and the aim of living consistently with our own particular nature, a particular action may be appropriate for one individual but not for another: it was appropriate for the serious and unyielding Cato to commit suicide, for example, although it might not have been fitting for someone of a milder and more pliant nature. On the face of it, this looks like persuasive evidence for moral particularism having a significant part to play in Panaetius' ethics, and as the first *persona* is common (*universa*) to all human beings and comprised of our shared rationality and potential for developing the virtues (107), it looks as if this passage provides evidence for a universalist/particularist theme in Stoic ethics as well.

Gill argues (140) that to interpret the text in such a light is to miss the main point, which is that 'the overriding norm is neither universality nor particularity but consistency (*constantia*)'. The aim is to live in accord with all four *personae* (the other two are one's social position and one's selected path or career), and this in turn will require that one harmonize the four roles themselves. When this happens, the *decorum/prepon* is achieved. For Gill, '[t]he dominant normative idea associated with *decorum/prepon* is that of consistency and wholeness'; this is because in Stoicism,

possession of any one virtue means possessing the whole set, since they are unified or inter-entailing. This in turn gives rise to a kind of psychic health or beauty, that supervenes on the possession of the virtues and 'shines out' as a quality of seemliness or 'just-rightness' (*decorum/prepon*).

Further support for his view that particularism is not a primary concern in this passage is adduced by Gill from the fact that although Cicero begins by talking of the wide variety in individual natures, in practice he concentrates on just one main distinction, that between the rigid/severe type and the pliant/gentle.

I believe that Gill is right to maintain that constancy and integrated wholeness are the central ordering principles of this text: at *On Duties* 1.120 we are told that *constantia* is the essence of 'what is fitting' (*decet*), while at 1.111 the *decorum* is said to be nothing other than *aequibilitas*. Yet Cicero also, it seems to me, makes it clear that the expression of such constancy and equability are inextricably bound up with both particularist and universalist issues. While we should never do anything contrary to universal human rationality, being harmonious and consistent will also mean taking cognizance of the particular features of one's situation, including how they accord (or not) with one's particular disposition:

Each person should hold on to what is his as far as it is not vicious, but is peculiar to him, so that the seemliness (*decorum illud*) that we are seeking might more easily be maintained. For we must act in such a way that we attempt nothing contrary to universal nature, so that even if other pursuits may be weightier and better, we should measure our own by the rule of our own nature. For it is appropriate neither to fight against nature nor to pursue anything that you cannot attain. Consequently, it becomes clearer what that seemliness is like, precisely because nothing is seemly 'against Minerva's will', as they say, that is, when your nature opposes and fights against it. (*On Duties* 1.110)⁷

It is not, therefore, plain to me that correctly highlighting the importance of *constantia* means that we should cease to consider the particularist and universalist/particularist dimensions of the passage. Nor is it clear to me that such a consideration would be ahistorical, as Gill comes close to suggesting when he recommends his interpretation partly on the grounds that it does not import 'a rather modern-looking interest in individual particularity' (143). He also talks of the 'modern assumptions' which 'encourage us to analyse in terms of the contrast between universality and particularity', while Sorabji's account (which emphasizes what Sorabji perceives as the moral particularist dimensions of the Cato *exemplum*) 'may be seen as a compelling reading of the passage in the light of

⁷ Translated by Griffin and Atkins (1991).

some modern ethical paradigms, but also one that maps less readily on to Stoic categories' (141). While Gill may well be right that 'it is much less clear that the contrast between universality and particularity (or between universalism and particularism) is equally important in ancient ethical theory' (130), the notion that such categories and distinctions are solely 'modern' assumptions and interests is, I believe, going too far. It is hard to be precise about this, since, as we saw above in our rapid historical tour, 'moral particularism' and 'moral universalism' are such umbrella terms. However, there still seem to me a number of ancient sources where universalist and particularist concerns are central to the ethical debate. In addition to Aristotle's distinction between justice and equity also mentioned above, the ladder of love advocated by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* is a striking example of love for and interest in particulars being pushed aside by love for the universal, while Alcibiades' character and discourse prompt us to reflect on the merit of ascending such a ladder (in his encomium to Socrates, Alcibiades emphasizes Socrates' inimitable uniqueness at 221b–d).

Nevertheless, despite these differences, Gill is absolutely right to highlight the importance of *constantia* and *aequibilitas* in Stoic (and Stoic-Roman) thought as foundational organizing concepts. At least as important are the implications of his paper for current ethical thinking and practice: namely that we would be well advised not to ignore these somewhat unfashionable qualities, but again to treat them as central. As Gill correctly notes, they can only exist in characters of integrated wholeness, and I would add that the emphasis on integrity has a long and honourable pedigree, going back at least to Socrates and Plato. In Plato's *Laches*, two Athenian gentlemen seek the advice of two generals, Laches and Nicias, on whether the new technique of fighting in armour should be taught to their sons. Laches suggests they ask Socrates, who has not only devoted himself to the study of which practices young men should pursue, but is of excellent character, having acquitted himself with honour in the retreat from Delium (181a–b). Later (188c–d), Laches expands on this point, saying he only respects the arguments of the man 'who has created the most beautiful harmony ... by making his own life a symphony between his words and his deeds': such a man, indeed, is the true *mousikos*. Laches even admits that he has not yet heard Socrates' arguments, but his experience of Socrates' courage at Delium inclines him towards them. This passage anticipates perhaps the most central theme of the *Republic*, namely that justice is the condition which makes possible harmonious agreement between the three parts of the *psychê*, a kind of

psychic health or beauty or fitness (443–444). At 591d, in a particularly close echo of the *Laches*, we are told that the just man attunes the harmony of his body to the harmony of his *psychê*, since he is the genuine *mousikos*.

In emphasizing this genealogy, I am of course suggesting that we need to blur the edges a little between what Gill terms (142) a Stoic/Epicurean approach to ethical development and a Platonic/Aristotelian approach in Hellenistic and Roman thought. Gill believes that these differences (which concern the attainability of complete wisdom and virtue) go along with ‘a set of related contrasts ... between a unified or holistic (Stoic/Epicurean) and a part-based (Platonic/Aristotelian) psychological theory.’ Yet this is to ignore the seminal influence that Socrates, and Socrates’ consistency, had on Stoic ethics. The Stoics explicitly claimed Socrates as one of their heroes,⁸ and when we consider Laches’ emphasis on the integrity of Socrates’ character and the harmony between his words and his deeds, we can see why. It is true that Gill does both acknowledge and discuss the Socratic and Platonic inheritance with regard to integrity and constancy in *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*,⁹ but he somewhat puzzlingly does not focus on these vital connections in the present paper, with the result that the distinctions he perceives between Stoic/Epicurean and Platonic/Aristotelian ethical styles and moral psychologies are, it seems to me, in this instance overly clear-cut. And if we follow Alcibiades’ lead in the *Symposium*, it is apparent that Socrates’ heightened integrity¹⁰ is one of the particular features of his character that make him unique (221c–d). In short, Gill is right (and importantly right) to emphasise that the focus in the Stoic passages he discusses is on constancy and structured wholeness, but such an approach to ethics, I would submit, allows room for elements of moral particularism too.

⁸ See Long 1988, 150–171.

⁹ The Stoic/Epicurean concern with structure and its absence is ‘prefigured especially in certain aspects of Platonic thought’ (xv), while the claim that the fully rational and virtuous (or wise) person is fully integrated or coherent is explicitly said to be a Socratic ethical claim and ideal (xvii). In his ch. 2 Gill discusses how Plato’s Socrates was a source of inspiration and ethical exemplar for the Stoics.

¹⁰ Socrates’ constancy and consistency are particularly emphasised by Alcibiades in his account of Socrates’ behaviour on military service in Potidaea (219e–220d).

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CHAPTER SIX

ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS ON PARTICULARS AND THE STOIC CRITERION OF IDENTITY¹

MARWAN RASHED

One could claim that for an Aristotelian philosopher, particulars are not a philosophical problem—at least not an epistemological one. For an Aristotelian philosopher daily confronted with Stoic theories of Providence and individuation, however, this was a haunting question. After all, what did Aristotle have to say on the status of the particulars not *qua* belonging to a species, but *qua* pure singularities taking place within the world? I would like to show that even if Alexander is too much of an Aristotelian to have a real theory of the particular, his reaction to his historical context leads him to new insights on this topic. These insights, in turn, constitute a starting point out of which Avicenna and Leibniz developed their ideas about how fatalism could be avoided without giving up the principle that the entire effect corresponds to its full cause. I will try to sketch, in the following pages, the main phases of this long and intricate story.

1. *Some preliminaries: Dexippus on the ἰδίως ποιόν*

The problem of the particulars in the Aristotelian tradition seems to me best understood if we start with a strange passage taken from Porphyry's *Isagoge* (7.16–19). I quote Jonathan Barnes' recent translation (Barnes 2003, 8):

... a most general item is said of everything under it—genera and species and individuals; a genus which comes before a most special item is said of all the most special items and of the individuals; an item which is only a species is said of all the individuals; and an individual is said of one only of the particulars.

¹ All my thanks to R.W. Sharples, who invited me to present this paper at the Seventh Keeling Colloquium, and to Peter Adamson, Riccardo Chiaradonna, Richard Sorabji and Kevin Tracy for helpful discussions on different aspects of it. The errors are mine.

In the translation, “individual” stands for τὸ ἄτομον and “particular” for τὸ κατὰ μέρος. The doctrine expressed here has already struck readers as un-Aristotelian. I should mention in particular A.C. Lloyd, R. Chiaradonna and R. Sorabji:² how is it possible to explain that contrary to the strict separation between primary and secondary substance we find in the *Categories*, and to the fact that the individual cannot be an object of predication, Porphyry applies the structure of predication until the last ontological level? Why does he not respect the boundary between the general and the particular so clearly drawn by Aristotle himself?

It is not my purpose today to scrutinize all the intricacies of Porphyry’s doctrine of predication. I only want to lend emphasis to the distinction he draws, at the lowest level, between the individual, which in this sense is to be assimilated to some sort of predicate, and the particular which represents the logico-ontological subject of the ultimate predication. Or, more exactly, Porphyry seems to envisage the individual under a double aspect, first its sensible existence, which is a simple and obvious fact (which is much more problematic for Plotinus) and secondly its verbal formulation. By this, I mean its formulation as a particular individual, and not as a member of a species or a genus. I think that Chiaradonna has definitely shown that this text must be understood in the light of a declaration of Dexippus, in his commentary on the *Categories* (30.20–26), about the possibility of differentiating between some particulars belonging to the same species. Let us quote this text in the translation of (Long and Sedley 1987, text 28J, vol. 1, 169):

But if form is that which is predicated in the category of essence of a plurality of numerically different things, in what does single individual differ from single individual, seeing that each is numerically single? Those who solve this difficulty on the basis of the peculiarly qualified—that one individual is distinguished, say, by hookedness of the nose, by blondness, or by some other combination of qualities (συνδρομῇ ποιότητων), another by snubness, baldness, or greyness of the eyes, and again another by other qualities—do not seem to me to solve it well.

² Cf. (Lloyd 1956), (Chiaradonna 2000) and (Sorabji 2004, vol. 3, 165–168). According to Sorabji, Porphyry borrows from the *Theaetetus* (209c), not some Stoics, the idea that an individual person is a quality or a bundle of qualities. His reason would be to spare beginners the details of matter and form, which he omits only for pedagogical reasons. Be this as it may, that commits him to what will interest us here, that the individual person, being qualities, can be predicated of something else. See also (Sorabji 2006, 137–153).

Two points must be noted here: first, Dexippus does not mention by their name the people whom he is criticising for having admitted such a theory of the *ιδίως ποιόν*. It is not obvious at all, therefore, that we have to identify them with the Stoics, nor even with some authors having misinterpreted their doctrine. Secondly, the problem faced by Dexippus is, in a sense, purely Aristotelian: for if (1) the form (*εἶδος*) constitutes the lowest level we can express through discursive language, and (2) for an Aristotelian, what is real can be seized through a formula, how are we to conceive of the individual's manner of existence? I follow then Chiaradonna's proposal to understand this text as directed primarily against Porphyry (and not some Stoics). It is Porphyry's doctrine of the particular substance which is at stake, i.e. the claim made by the commentator that the individual can be, if not defined, at least described, by a collection of characteristics. In other words, we have to identify the "individual" in the text already quoted, which was predicated there of the "particular", with the famous *ἄθροισμα ιδιοτήτων* of the *Isagoge*.

At this stage, we must contrast this doctrine, which seems genuinely Porphyrian, with another one already to be found in Alexander: in view of his Aristotelian doctrine of the immanent form, Alexander is ready—at some level of generality, and leaving the cosmological conditions of the problem out of consideration; see (Rashed, M. 2007, 254–257)—to admit that some genus may include only one species, or some species only one individual. The two cases have in fact almost nothing in common: according to Alexander's point, there would be no impossibility, in the case of species with some unique token (such as the species "sun" or "world", for instance), that there be more.³ There would be no logical contradiction if there were more than one sun, or even more than one world. On the contrary, according to the vertical structure (from top to bottom) of Porphyry's doctrine, it is as impossible to find two particulars having the same individual formula as to find two species having the same definition. However, precisely this tenet raises a problem. Nearly every formula (more on this restriction later), be it a canonic definition *per genus and differentiam* or a simple description, because it is composed out of common nouns, can be applied, precisely, in common, to many particulars. If "snub" or "bald" are more than proper names but there

³ On this problem, see in particular Simplicius, *In Cat.* 55.24–56.15.

are always two or more particulars to whom these adjectives can be truly attributed, then it is no help to consider a collection of such terms instead of only one of them.

That is why Dexippus replies, in the lines immediately following his exposition of the argument, by saying (Dexippus, *In Cat.* 30.26–30):

For it is not the conjunction of qualities which makes them differ numerically, but, if anything, quality as such. We should rather reply to the problem as follows, that things that are numerically distinct do not differ from each other in nature and essence, but their distinctness resides in their countability. They are different, then, in being countable; for it is in the process of each being counted one by one that number arises.

Dexippus rejects every differentiation of the particular which would treat it as a nature or essence. Whereas a difference between two genera, or two species, can be understood on the basis of two different formulas, this approach becomes inadequate in the case of two co-specific particulars. Their difference is only to be explained *κατὰ τὸ ἀριθμεῖσθαι*. By saying this, Dexippus seems to stress the etymological validity of the Aristotelian terminology. When the Aristotelians say that the particular substance is one *ἀριθμῷ*, they mean that it is a distinct element belonging to some set of homospecific elements, this set having some cardinal. A particular apple is such only because it belongs to a countable set of apples, a particular man to a countable set of men, etc. Even if Dexippus does not state it explicitly, it seems that we can go a step further and hold that according to him, this theory allows for the possibility of two individual substances being in their constitution entirely identical. This identity does not threaten the fact that we *can* distinguish between them, just by counting them.

2. Alexander's criticism of the eternal return

It seems likely that the main tenets of Dexippus' deflationist reply to Porphyry's *Isagoge* go back to some piece of orthodox Peripateticism. For the idea that the distinction between two individuals of the same species is a simple fact, irreducible to any conceptual (classificatory) formulation, is genuinely Aristotelian. There is however a question that Dexippus does not address—for he does not need to address it in the context of a commentary on the *Categories*—, namely that of the explanation, for two homospecific individuals, not so much of their mere discernibility (which indeed simply occurs *κατὰ τὸ ἀριθμεῖσθαι*) as of their eventual

idiosyncrasy. In other terms, even if the spatial and temporal conditions of existence of any physical substance are sufficient to explain why any two such substances are not one and the same object, Dexippus tells us nothing about the *corporeal* features of these substances. As soon as one tackles this question, however, it appears that Porphyry's curious doctrine expresses a serious difficulty in the Aristotelian ontology of the sensible world.

At the end of chapter II.11 of *On Coming-to-be and Passing-away* (which is also the end of the treatise), Aristotle affirms (338b5–19) that the return in number of individual sublunar substances is impossible. The only form of eternal return pertains to the species. The species is eternal, but no individual is such, neither as sempiternal (for it is doomed to corruption), nor as reappearing periodically. If the first option seems uncontroversial to everybody in antiquity, the second one is much more difficult. Let us assume, in effect, that everything that is created can be totally explained by the presence of some undifferentiated matter on the one hand, and of some efficient causality produced by the disposition of the cosmos on the other. Then, matter being always the same, the coming again of some given configuration will be necessary and sufficient for the coming again of some individual compound, hence of some individual substance. It is exactly the doubt expressed by some philosophers, according to Alexander quoted by Philoponus in his commentary:⁴

Someone might, as Alexander says, raise a difficulty against Aristotle. For if matter always persists as the same, and the efficient cause is always the same, what would be the reason for there not coming to be again, over some longer period of time, the same things from the same matter, produced by the same [causes]? Some indeed say that this happens during the rebirth and the Great Year, in which there happens the restoration of all things as the same. This being the case, there could also be the rebirth and recurrence in number of particular individuals whose substance is perishable.

⁴ Philoponus, *In Gen. Corr.* 314.9–16: Ἀπορήσει δ' ἂν τις, ὥς φησιν Ἀλέξανδρος, πρὸς Ἀριστοτέλην· εἰ γὰρ ἡ ὕλη ἢ αὐτὴ αἰεὶ διαμένει, ἔστι δὲ καὶ τὸ ποιητικὸν αἴτιον τὸ αὐτὸ αἰεὶ, διὰ ποίαν αἰτίαν οὐχὶ κατὰ περιόδον τινα πλείονος χρόνου ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ὕλης τὰ αὐτὰ πάλιν κατ' ἀριθμὸν ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτῶν ἔσται; ὅπερ τινὲς φασὶ κατὰ τὴν παλιγγενεσίαν καὶ τὸν μέγαν ἐνιαυτὸν συμβαίνειν, ἐν ᾧ πάντων τῶν αὐτῶν ἀποκατάστασις γίνεται. τούτου δ' ὄντος εἴη ἂν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα, ὧν φθαρτὴ ἡ οὐσία, παλιγγενεσία καὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἀνάκαμψις.

To this objection, Alexander replies in the following terms:⁵

To this it should be replied that even if it is granted that Socrates is re-born, the Socrates who came to be later will not be one and the same in number with the Socrates who had come to be earlier. For that which is one and the same in number cannot have intervals: for one in number comes about not on account of being from the same things, but on account of persisting as the same, when being earlier and later. Therefore the sun is the same in number, but Socrates, as he said, is not the same in number; for the individual form does not persist, even though matter persists.

Alexander's answer, it is worth being noted, does not reject the idea of the individual being intrinsically the same. He thinks rather that even if Socrates-2 has exactly the same physical composition as Socrates-1, this is not sufficient for holding that Socrates-1 and -2 are identical. For an individual substance to be identical is to *remain* identical over some period of time. Alexander does not explain here what he means by this temporal identity. He does not envisage all the puzzles that one can raise against the idea of a material continuity, as soon as we hold matter to be fluid, something he dwells upon elsewhere (see Kupreeva 2004). He just states that some break in the temporal existence of the individual substance makes every self-identity impossible.

Thus, an important question remains: even if it is *possible* for two substances to have the same physical constitution, does this situation really happen in the history of the world? Philoponus remains silent on this issue, but we are lucky enough to be taught by Averroes' *Epitome of Gen. Corr.*, that Alexander denied this eventuality: exactly the same physical constitution does never repeat itself in the world. Here is a translation of this text:⁶

Alexander believes that the state and disposition of the spheres at any given time never recur individually. He maintains that if we assume all of the stars to be at a particular point in the sphere of the constellations, for example in the Ram, and then all of them, both the fast and the slow ones, begin to move, they need not necessarily all of them revert to the exact

⁵ Ibid., 314.16–22: πρὸς τοῦτο δὲ ῥητέον ὅτι εἰ καὶ δοθῇ πάλιν Σωκράτης γίνεσθαι, οὐ τῷ ἀριθμῷ ὁ αὐτὸς ἂν εἴη τῷ πρώτῳ γενομένῳ Σωκράτει ὁ ὕστερος γεγὼνὼς καὶ εἷς. οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἓν καὶ ταῦτό κατ' ἀριθμὸν διαλείπειν· οὐ γὰρ τῷ ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν εἶναι ἓν κατ' ἀριθμὸν γίνεται, ἀλλὰ τῷ τὸ αὐτὸ διαμένειν πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον ὄν. διὸ ἥλιος μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς κατ' ἀριθμὸν, Σωκράτης δέ, ὡς εἶπεν, οὐχ ὁ αὐτὸς κατ' ἀριθμὸν· οὐ γὰρ μένει τὸ ἄτομον εἶδος, εἰ καὶ ἡ ὕλη μένει. I adapt this translation from (Kupreeva 2005, 109).

⁶ For the Arabic text, see (Ibn Rušd 1991, 35.10–36.9). I adapt the present English translation from (Kurland 1958, 137–138).

same point from which they began their movement, but the revolutions of some will be proportionate to those of others, so that, for example, when the sun completes one revolution the moon will have completed twelve. And there will be a similar relationship between the revolution of the sun and of each one of the stars. Then it should be possible for all of them to return to any one place, to any place you may postulate. But we find the exact opposite to take place. For the sun traverses its sphere in $365\frac{1}{4}$ days and the moon traverses its sphere in $27\frac{1}{2}$ days. When $27\frac{1}{2}$ days are multiplied [by twelve], they do not yield $365\frac{1}{4}$ days. Since this is so, and the efficient cause does not return upon itself numerically, and neither can the material cause do so, it becomes evident that it is impossible in any way whatsoever for the individual to recur. Now that is what we set out to prove.

We might add to what we have already said that even though the revolution of the moon is not commensurate with that of the sun in days, it does not follow that they are not commensurate with one another at all. For it is possible that their common unit of measurement is a shorter time. But if that were so, the common measure could be one quarter of a day. To ascertain whether these revolutions of the stars are commensurable or not is most difficult or well nigh impossible, for that would have to be based upon a knowledge of the time of a single revolution in the case of each star as it is in truth. That is impossible because of the limited and approximated nature of our observation of these things. What we can ascertain in this matter is that they are approximately commensurate to one another, as the astronomers believe. Whatever the case may be, it is impossible for the individual to recur.

It seems that with the help of both testimonies, we can reconstruct in its entirety Alexander's answer to the upholders of the eternal return of individuals. For it is often the case that in such polemical contexts, Alexander divides his response into two parts.⁷ The first move is called by him ἀντιπαράστασις, the second ἔνστασις. The ἀντιπαράστασις consists in admitting, for the sake of the argument, the opponent's first assumption, on the basis of which he tries to destroy Aristotle's theory, and to show that this assumption does not lead to that result. The ἔνστασις, on its side, attacks directly the opponent's assumption by showing that and how it is false. A clear example of this way of proceeding is furnished by Simplicius' commentary on the *De caelo*, where Alexander's response to one of Xenarchus' objections is presented under this double form.⁸ Xenarchus' argument was directed against Aristotle's claim that there are only two kinds of simple lines, the straight one and the circular, hence only two

⁷ See (Rashed, M. 2004, 25–26; 45–46 in the reprint).

⁸ See Simplicius, *In De caelo* 13.22–14.29.

kinds of simple motions. Apollonius has shown, says Xenarchus, that the helicoidal line is simple as well. Therefore, it is impossible to prove by following this path that there are only two—and not, after all, three—simple motions. Alexander replies first κατ' ἀντιπαράστασιν: even if we concede to Xenarchus that the helicoidal line is simple, it does not follow that the simple motions are not two. For Aristotle was not saying that the different kinds of simple lines are *efficient causes* (13.31, ποιητικὰ αἰτια) for the different kinds of simple motions. There may perfectly well be some simple line to which no simple motion corresponds. The task of ἀντιπαράστασις being thus completed, Alexander can now respond κατ' ἔνστασιν: it is false that the helicoidal line is simple, because it is generated by two simultaneous motions, one straight on the surface of a cylinder parallel to its axis and the other circular (the rotation of the cylinder around its axis).

I propose then to interpret our two testimonies in the same manner. Philoponus would have preserved Alexander's ἀντιπαράστασις (“even if we concede the return of the same physical constitution produced by the same astral configuration, it does not follow that its two instantiations are *numerically* identical to one another”) and Averroes his ἔνστασις (“it is false that the same astral configuration—and, by way of consequence, the same physical constitution—occurs twice in the world history”).

We have reached so far the conclusion that Dexippus' reply to Porphyry only superficially agrees with the main tenets of Alexander's ontology. For sure, Alexander would have objected to the thesis of the ἄθροισμα ιδιοτήτων that it cancels the important distinction between the species and the individual; that only a species can be adequately expressed through a formula; that a particular, on the contrary, is simultaneously too wide and too narrow for this approach.⁹ But Alexander, unlike Dexippus, since he is engaged in a polemic against the Stoics, must explain why two individuals must be not only distinct, but also, in the eternity of time, intrinsically different *and*, to some extent, unpredictable. What then is Alexander's solution?

⁹ Too wide, because its particular features are probably infinite, and surely indefinite, so that they cannot be grasped by a formula, as extended as it may be; too narrow, because for every formula composed of common nouns, it is always possible to find two particulars to which this “individual” formula—to use Porphyry's terminology—may be applied.

3. *Three disconnected claims in Alexander:
matter as non-being, free-will, and astral singularities*

A first answer consists in underlining the role of matter. Form, as is well-known, is according to Aristotle unable to master the matter entirely. There are always “material circumstances” which explain that the form never realises itself in exactly the same way. This answer is not unknown to Alexander.¹⁰ However, this solution to our problem is not entirely satisfactory. For matter as such, or *prima materia*, is pure indifferentiation. It is only through some formal activity—already at the lowest level of the homeomers—that we are confronted with some differentiation. We do not see therefore why the matter would account for the differentiation of the particular. As such, matter is as perfectly regular and indifferenced as the void. If we have only form and matter in the world, it would be more plausible to attribute to some formal principle, and not to the matter, the existence of *different* particulars. In this sense, Porphyry’s attempt at giving a version of the ἰδίως ποιόν in terms of form was not absurd.

Alexander, in the passage from his commentary on the end of *Gen. Corr.*, was very probably responding to some people holding, at least by way of hypothesis, the everlasting recurrence of astral configurations. It is striking that in the fragment quoted in translation by Averroes, reference is made to the eternal return of the *individual* configuration (cf. 35.11 and 36.9: *bi-al-šahṣ*). I think we can interpret this allusion, on the face of it, in two different ways, one more akin to astral fatalism—everything that happens is produced by the stars—, the other to astral determinism—everything that happens is ultimately produced by the stars, except what stems out of our (free) will.

In their chapter on Stoic everlasting recurrence, Long and Sedley rightly individuate four distinct claims on this issue:¹¹

- a. Socrates-1 and -2 are numerically identical;
- b. They are indiscernible tokens of the same type;
- c. They are numerically identical but inessentially discernible;
- d. They are slightly discernible tokens of the same type.

¹⁰ See for example Alexander, *De anima*, 87.13–14.

¹¹ Long and Sedley (1987, vol. 1, 312).

According to (a), we have one and only one Socrates. It is even misleading to speak of Socrates-1 and -2. According to (b), the fact that they are separated by some period of time where they do not exist makes them numerically different. However, their physical constitution and their relations to the other items and events of their respective world is the same. According to (c), we would have the curious thesis that though numerically identical, Socrates-1 and -2 would be discernible “with respect to certain external accidents”. Since this report is made only by Alexander, I shall come back to it shortly. Finally, (d) presents itself explicitly as a revision of the original doctrine. It is feeble and does not need to retain us longer here.

On all this, Alexander is our most important evidence. For (a) is attested almost exclusively by him (directly or through Simplicius), and (c) by him only.¹² Moreover, we owe the mention of Chrysippus’ *On the World*, in this context, to his commentary on the *An. Pr.* (180.36). In other words, Alexander is our sole evidence—perhaps, although less clearly, together with Nemesis—attributing to the Stoics the thesis of the numerical identity of Socrates-1 and -2. Alexander’s ἀντιπαράστασις in Philoponus confirms this remark. Alexander was objecting to his adversary that even if the celestial return was conceded, such a fact would not imply by itself the numerical identity of Socrates-1 and -2 (i.e. Long and Sedley’s thesis [a]) but only their being indiscernible tokens of the same type (Long and Sedley’s [b]). This dialectical move obviously implies that the thesis of Alexander’s adversaries, as interpreted by him at least, consisted in (a) rather than in (b). This being said, it is remarkable that (b) is presented explicitly as a revision of (a) by its unique exponent, Origen.¹³ I think, then, that Philoponus’ quotation confirms the suggestion expressed by Long and Sedley that (a) represents the original doctrine of the Stoics on this issues, (b) (c) (d) being revisions made to render the claim of everlasting recurrence more acceptable by laymen. Alexander was perfectly right on this issue.

In the light of the evidence produced so far, it would seem possible that the Stoics, rather than some astrologers, were Alexander’s target in the commentary on *Gen. Corr.* Even if they are not named and even if Averroes designates them only as “partisans of the returns”, it was certainly the Stoic, and even Chrysippus’ doctrine of the numerical iden-

¹² See, respectively, Alexander, *In An. Pr.* 180.33–36 + 181.25–31 (= 52F Long & Sedley), Simplicius, *In Phys.* 886.12–16 (= 52E Long & Sedley).

¹³ Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.68 (= 52G Long & Sedley).

tity of Socrates-1 and -2, which Alexander aimed at. Things being so, how are we to understand astral determinism, as opposed to fatalism, according to the Stoics?

A comparison with Chrysippus' ideas on divination might here give some insight into the question. Chrysippus, who wants to save divination as well as to avoid necessitarianism, attempts rewriting this conditional as a negated conjunction. In a well-known and much disputed text (*De fato*, § 15), Cicero writes the following: "... At this point Chrysippus loses his cool. He hopes that the Chaldeans and other seers can be cheated, and that they will so use connectives as not to put their theorems in the form 'If someone was born at the rising of the Dogstar, he will not die at sea' but rather so as to say 'Not both: someone was born at the rising of the Dogstar, and he will die at sea'. What hilarious self-indulgence! To avoid collapsing into Diodorus' position, he teaches the Chaldeans how they should express their theorems!"¹⁴ Would Chrysippus have expressed himself in the same way with regard to the mere existence of the individual, as to say; "not both: x is born at the date t and he will not display the ἰδία ποιότης i "? I think that answer to this question must be negative, for the two cases under consideration are different. From this point of view, a sentence introducing Averroes' report must be recalled. The Commentator says that "the partisans of the returns ... say that when the position which belonged to all the parts of the heavens when Zayd was existing comes back again, then Zayd comes back one and the same again". It is noteworthy that Alexander—if (as I assume) he is Averroes' source here—employs a conditional. Of course, it would be very unlikely that even if his adversary had formulated this case according to the pattern set forth by Chrysippus for divination, Alexander would have bothered himself with such a refined hairsplitting. But despite this restriction, it seems probable that the adversary would not have disagreed with the formulation by means of a conditional. With $C(p_\sigma, t_\sigma)$ designating some cosmic configuration viewed from the birthplace of Socrates at the instant of the birth of Socrates and σ designating Socrates' peculiar existence, the adversary holds: "if/when $C(p_\sigma, t_\sigma)$, then σ ", implying by this that C has some *material effect* on the constitution of the ἰδία ποιότης of σ . I think that this represents the tenor of §§ 7–8 of Cicero's *De fato*, passage in which we find attributed to Chrysippus the idea of a difference of nature (*natura*) due to the general environment. I am very tempted to

¹⁴ Translation borrowed from (Long and Sedley 1987, vol. 1, pp. 232–233).

interpret the word *natura*, here, as referring to the different *ἰδίως ποιὰ* and I must confess that I do not even see what other candidate could be suitable.¹⁵ Cicero, on my view, would have neglected, for polemical reasons or because he misunderstood it, the fact that a distinction had to be drawn between our *ἰδίως ποιόν* being cast at the instant of our birth and the series of all our actions, my being on this chair rather than on that, etc.

To return to the proposition “if $C(p_\sigma, t_\sigma)$, then σ ”, it is obvious that it can be temporally expanded so as to become perfectly general. By “general”, I do not intend here some Aristotelian *καθόλου*, but the extensive and historical sum of all world-events. With ΣC designating the ordered series of all celestial configurations and $\Sigma \sigma$ the ordered series of all sublunar births, we would be allowed to say: “if ΣC , then $\Sigma \sigma$ ”. Further, if it can be proved that the series ΣC possesses some necessity of itself, we have to admit, at the level of the constitution of the *ἰδίως ποιόν*—but only at that level, if we reject Cicero’s testimony on this point—necessitarianism as true.

Thus, Philoponus would give us a clue—unnoticed as such until now—for our understanding of the Stoic *ἰδίως ποιόν*.¹⁶ The three basic premisses are the following:

- a. there never happens to be, between two successive conflagrations, the same astral configuration;
- b. the *ἰδίως ποιόν* is tempered in the air, like a steel in some liquid, at the instant of birth; as such, it is closely connected with soul;
- c. the air, as part of the atmosphere, is directly influenced by the position of the stars.

Of these three premisses, only the second one is attested in the ancient sources. It appears in von Arnim’s collection under the headline *anima refrigeratione orta* as a general Stoic doctrine (SVF II.804–808). It is plain, however, that we can attribute it to Chrysippus in particular with some confidence, for von Arnim has simply overlooked the fragment, to be found in *Ad Gaurum* XIV 4, where the author (probably Porphyry) mentions “the air which, according to Chrysippus, has swooped down

¹⁵ See also Cicero, *De officiis* I 109: *innumerabiles* [= ἀναρίθμητοι] ... *dissimilitudines naturae morumque*. On this text, see the article of Christopher Gill in the present volume.

¹⁶ For previous reconstructions of this doctrine, see (Sorabji 2004, vol. 3, 173–174, with further bibliographical indications).

on the nature at the instant of the exit from the throes of the birth”.¹⁷ From the Homeric age, the Greeks knew that when a metal is being tempered in water or oil, it acquires some extra virtues of resistance and solidity.¹⁸ The metaphor, in a Stoic context, was appealing. When the foetus is still kept in the mother’s womb, it has no real individuality but, as Roman theoreticians of law will express this situation later, it is only *pars ventris* of the mother—exactly as a fruit in the tree is part of the tree.¹⁹ At the very instant when the offspring sees the light, it becomes independent from its mother—being no more necessarily nourished by her, by contrast with its previous vegetative life in the womb—and, so to say, “cast” and “tempered” in the air under the form of a real human individual. I suggest, then, that there is a very close connection between the *ἰδία ποιότης* of individual animals, the soul as a con-nate πνεῦμα and the air in which we are tempered when we come to birth.

The two other premisses, even if they are not attested in our sources, are not extravagant. The first one may very well be implicit in the doctrine criticised by Alexander *ap.* Philoponus, and the third one is a minimal meteorological claim. If I am not entirely mistaken, the fact that for any two astral configurations C_i and C_j between two successive conflations, it is impossible that C_i be identical with C_j , assures us that any two ἰδίως ποιὰ cannot be identical.

On the other side, this cosmological structure presents the advantage of explaining why, provided that the astral trajectories follow the same course in each world, individuals with the same ἰδίως ποιὰ reappear from world to world. An objection could be that such a cosmos would be too mechanical, making Providence unnecessary. But this is not necessarily the case. A text from Philo, *On the sacrifice of animals* (= SVF II.695) alludes to the fact that the seasons take place for the sake of the preservation of the sublunary world: “for winter and summer, spring and autumn, seasons which come back every year and which are beneficial to life, are affections of the air, which is made changing for the sake of the

¹⁷ ὁ ἐπιπεσὼν ἀπὸ ὥς οἶεται Χρύσιππος ἅμα τῇ ἐξ ὠδίνων προόδῳ. See also the annotated French translation of the entire treatise in Festugière (1950, p. 293 for our passage).

¹⁸ Cf. (Daremberg and Saglio 1896, art. “Ferrum”, pp. 1093–1094).

¹⁹ Cf. Aët. *Plac.* V 15, 2 (= SVF II.756): οἱ Στωϊκοὶ μέρος εἶναι αὐτὸ (sc. τὸ ἔμβρυον) τῆς γαστρὸς, οὐ ζῶον· ὥσπερ γὰρ τοὺς καρποὺς μέρη τῶν φυτῶν ὄντας πεπαινομένους ἀπορρεῖν, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἔμβρυον. Cf. (Gourinat 2007, 75).

preservation of the things which come after the Moon.”²⁰ The different aspects of the sky in one cycle, being regular as well as each time different, would thus account for the perpetuation of similar individuals as well as for some principle of plenitude in the production of the *ἰδίως ποιά*. Thus, I guess that there was an important difference, for Chrysippus, between two types of top-bottom relations. The first type concerned the casting of the *ἰδίως ποιά*. In this case, we must postulate a rather direct and mechanical efficiency: our *ἰδίως ποιόν* is tempered by the outdoor atmosphere at the very instant of our birth. But Chrysippus is not Leibniz, the fact that Caesar will cross the Rubicon is no part of his *ἰδίως ποιόν*. The fact that Caesar would cross the Rubicon was predictable on a consideration of his astral theme,²¹ but it was not materially and *presently* inlaid into Caesar’s substance when his *φύσις*, at his birth, was tempered as a soul—we can only affirm that his person must have been endowed, then, with a set of natural properties which had *everything* to make him cross the Rubicon—but which would not have prevented him from being annihilated by a Gallic army before having crossed the Rubicon. It is, I guess, only in the case of correlations belonging to the second type and not to the first that Chrysippus changed the conditional into the negation of the conjunction.²²

Let us consider Alexander’s commentary on *Gen. Corr.* again. As already said, the *ἀντιπαράστασις* was the following: even if the same celestial configuration comes back again, Socrates-1 and -2 are not numerically identical; and the *ἔνστασις*: the same celestial configuration will never come back again. We notice a hidden premiss in the *ἀντιπαράστασις*, namely the direct connection between supralunar and sublunar world. Unfortunately, Alexander does not tell us whether he recognizes such a thesis as valid also within the framework of his own ontology. The answer to that question cannot be that he entirely dismisses it: his *Zeitgeist* was deeply influenced by astral determinism and, more decisively, Aristotelian passages such as *Physics* VIII 2, 253a7–20 seemed to explain

²⁰ Χειμῶν γὰρ καὶ θέρος ἕαδ τε καὶ μετόπωρον, αἱ ἐτήσιοι καὶ βιωφελέσταται ὥραι, παθήματα ἀέρος γέγονασιν, ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ τῶν μετὰ σελήνην τρεπομένου.

²¹ Anna Maria Ioppolo, in her review of (Long 2006) published in *Elenchos* 27 (2006) 502–510, in particular 506–509, provides compelling arguments against Long’s view (expressed in his (1977)) that, given his dates, Chrysippus is not likely to have been aware of any practice of astral divination.

²² I tend to be convinced, on this thorny topic, by the interpretation of Chrysippean modalities put forward by M. Mignucci and J. Vuillemin. See (Mignucci 2006) and (Vuillemin 1983) and (Vuillemin 1984, in particular 129–146, with the corrections published in (Vuillemin 1997)).

every internal impulsion in the living body as determined by its external surroundings. This context explains why, in the ἔνστασις, Alexander described the heavens as the efficient cause (*al-fāʿil* = τὸ ποιοῦν) of the individual. Thus, Alexander must have faced a problem which was not entirely dissimilar to that of Chrysippus. For even if Alexander objects to the Stoic position that in the case we posit an eternal return, Socrates-1 and -2 would not be *numerically* identical, this argument is of no great value if one's concern is above all to get rid of determinism. As soon as we posit astral determinism, be I intrinsically unique in the eternity of time (Alexander) or only in this world but indiscernible from my counterparts in the past and future worlds (Chrysippus), that does not seem to make any real difference with respect to the eventual autonomy of my choices. If, in the infinity of past and future worlds, I have ever given and shall ever give the same talk under the same circumstances, it seems at least very unlikely that there is anything like a free choice in my decision to deliver it.

The crucial problem, for Alexander, is finally to explain in which sense there can be something undetermined in the sensible, although everything which happens happens in virtue of a cause. And we must confess that each time Alexander is urged to specify what he has in mind, he appears much embarrassed. In his treatise *On fate*, he tries to argue against determinism by referring to our internal experience of choice and free-will²³—which seems simply to beg the question: how to be sure that this appearance of deliberation is not a mere illusion, a collateral effect in our phantasy of every action taking place “in us” under the influence of some external principle? By contrast, in the *Mantissa*, Alexander points to “matter”, which he assimilates to “not-being”, in order to explain that everything in nature is not causally determined.²⁴ As already said, it seems difficult not to consider this appeal to matter as a piece of wishful thinking. As we have previously remarked, matter as such

²³ See for example Alexander, *De fato* XII, 180.8–12: “... for choice is the impulse with desire towards what has been preferred as a result of deliberation. And for this reason choice does not apply to the things that come to be necessarily, nor to those that do so not necessarily but not through us, nor even in the case of all the things that do so through us; but in the case of those things that come to be through us over which we have control both to do and not to do them” (translation of (Sharples 1983, 57), who notes in his commentary, 142: “The definition of choice at 180.8 sqq. is based on Aristotle’s at *Eth. Nic.* 3.3. 1113a10 but cast in terminology borrowed from the Stoics”). On this text, see also (Lefebvre 2006, 105).

²⁴ See now the edition of the Greek text by (Sharples 2008, 118–122) and his commentary (Sharples 2008, 225–227). On this solution, see (Lefebvre 2006) 106–111.

is perfectly indifferenced, so that it seems hardly possible to attribute to it any resistance to the efficient principle, which would account for some autonomy at the level of the particulars.

I stop here my account of Alexander, noting how the three aspects of his defence of the singularity of the particular remain disconnected from one another: there are always singular configurations in the heavens, but their presence is only allusively brought into relation with the particular animals on earth; these are singular because of “matter”; in the case of human beings, their capacity of choosing each one of the two branches of any dilemma attempts to introduce another breach in the edifice of determinism, and may be another cause for the fact that the sublunar as a whole does not repeat itself in *exactly* the same way. Human deliberation introduces some perturbation on earth, however tenuous it may be as compared to the cosmos as a whole. Thus, we still do not have a coherent and all-embracing theory of the particular. This flaw in Alexander’s doctrine is likely to have a deep philosophical ground. Very simply put, Alexander attempts to refute determinism without giving up the principle that everything that happens happens in virtue of some cause. Matter, thus, plays for the particular the role as well of a cause as of a protection against other causes, like the astral principles, which would be “more” a cause, so to say, than itself.

4. *Avicenna and Leibniz*

a. *Avicenna*

In order to have a coherent theory of the particular, in this neo-Aristotelian context, one of the two fundamental premisses had to be given up: either by accepting that the sublunar particular be entirely determined by the supralunar world, or by assuming that something can happen without a cause.

For various reasons, in particular some tenets of his Neoplatonist creed, Avicenna is a convinced determinist. Everything in the world happens because of some causes of higher status. The sublunar world, including what pertains to our choices and volitions, is totally determined by astral positions, themselves dictated by a finite number of superior intellects subordinated to one another. Avicenna had surely access to Alexander’s commentary on *Gen. Corr.*—known, as we have seen, to Averroes in the Muslim far West a century later—and makes use of it in his own treatise.

tise devoted to generation and corruption (Ibn Sīnā, 1969, 195–200. The Latin medieval translation has been edited: cf. (Avicenna, 1987, 148–151) for our passage). Avicenna's position, then, represents a kind of compromise, urged by some Neoplatonist principles, between Alexander and the Stoic position he criticizes.

If our previous reconstruction is correct, Avicenna has thus read, in Alexander's response to the anonymous Stoics, the ἀντιπαράστασις and the ἔνστασις. In the first move, Alexander was implicitly accepting the influence of the supralunar on the sublunar and explicitly denying that the two particulars determined by two identical astral configurations were numerically identical; in the second move, Alexander was denying that some astral configuration might come back again, but committed a strange mistake, spotted by Averroes: he inferred from the fact that the lunar and solar period are not commensurable in full days the erroneous conclusion that they are not commensurable at all. Of course, as remarked by Averroes, what is not commensurable in full days can nevertheless be commensurable, provided that we can find some smaller common unit (Ibn Rušd 1991, 36.3–6).

Avicenna had thus all the necessary ingredients for a new theory of the particular. I want first to sketch its main tenets.²⁵

There is nothing to say about matter, apart from the fact that it is there. As soon as we try to attribute to it some resistance to the informative action of some agent, we credit it with a physical property which contradicts the fact that it has, *per se*, no property at all. The only intrinsic property it has is the fact that it occupies a tridimensional continuous space. Avicenna's idea is thus the following: it is sufficient, if we want to avoid the case of indiscernible tokens of the same type, to interpret their difference as the result of some spatial variation in the disposition of matter, as small as we wish. Socrates will be different from his counterpart, for example, because of some minimal variation in the disposition of matter when he was conceived or in his subsequent history. But how to explain the possibility, in a determinist account, that there will always be some difference in the disposition of matter? The answer lies in the postulate of the relative incommensurability of the angular velocity of the different astral periods. The ratios between these periods being irrational, it is impossible to have twice exactly the same configuration. For the same reason, we shall never find

²⁵ For more details and a French translation of the Arabic, see (Rashed, M. 2000).

exactly the same sublunar events repeating themselves. Human history, in particular, will not repeat itself. Every particular is intrinsically singular.²⁶

Accordingly, there is a real gap between the superior and the inferior levels of emanation. The superior levels can be treated with the help of a discrete calculus. For, the principles being finite in number, their relationships are also finite in number and can be calculated. This fact gave rise to the invention of combinatorics by al-Ṭūsī, mathematician, astronomer and commentator of Avicenna (Rashed, R. 1991). By contrast, the inferior levels—which correspond to the sensible world, including the supralunar spheres—fall under the jurisdiction of the continuum and the geometrical irrational. One notices immediately, in the context of divine providence, how interesting this distinction can be. For even if we assume that God knows the decimal development of an irrational number, we cannot claim that this knowledge, for Him, is exactly of the same type as his knowledge of a rational number. There is a difference pertaining to the thing itself, and not just to our way of apprehending it. Then, if there is a way to “apply” this difference between discrete and continuous quantities or, which amounts to the same, between natural and irrational numbers, to the problem of Providence, we could have the formalization of the problem Alexander was in search of. What Alexander was calling “matter” becomes now irrationality. Incommensurability in the ratios between the angular velocities of the planets creates some third way between pure determinism and the radical autonomy of the sublunar realm with respect to higher cosmic principles.

I would like here to draw a hermeneutical distinction between the general intuition of this theory and its historical context. Its context is that of the cosmology of the Neoplatonists, which divides the world into the divine realm, where we have to posit the different types of Intellects, the

²⁶ Let us quote the text of the Latin medieval version (Avicenna, *Liber tertius*, pp. 149–150): “Verbi gratia, si numerus unius girationum esset quinque et alterius septem, et tertiae decem, convenirent in uno numero, et numerus septuaginta erit numerus participatus qui numeraretur ab istis numeris. Nam, quando dominus quinquenarii fuerit reversus decem et quattuor girationibus, et dominus septenarii decem girationibus, et dominus decennarii septem girationibus, [et] congregabuntur omnes simul, deinde numerabuntur in temporibus aequalibus figurae consimiles illis quae praeterierunt. Et, (si) comparatio temporum in girationibus non est comparatio numeri ad numerum, et istud potest esse quia tempora sunt continua, non abscissa, et non est impossibile quod continuum sit (diversum) a continui, sive sit rectum sive rotundum, non ergo erit eius relatio ad eum relatio numeri ad numerum. Et iam fuit istud verificatum in quantitativibus; erit ergo verificatum in motibus et in temporibus sine dubio, (et) est impossibile quod inveniatur aliquid

supralunar world, where we find extension and circular motion, and the sublunar world, whose material items are subject to generation and decay. It is obvious that Avicenna's reflexion attempts primarily at explaining how, in this determinist context, there can be some space for a certain kind of indetermination. But we may also look at his solution in a more general way, and ask ourselves whether it may have some validity outside its original context. I think it has, and that Leibniz has been sensitive to its theoretical richness.

b. *Leibniz*

Let us start with a relatively late text of Leibniz (written in 1715), which has been recently edited by M. Fichant (Leibniz 1991). Suggestively enough, it is entitled, *in Greek*, Ἀποκατάστασις πάντων, *Restitution of all things*. In the Greek cosmological context, the word had two significations, meaning either the Stoic everlasting recurrence or, in Origen, precisely against this Stoic doctrine, man's blessed afterlife. Even if it is beyond any doubt that Leibniz was well aware of Origen's doctrine—through his interest in Pedersen in particular (Leibniz 1991, 20–24)—his project, in the Ἀποκατάστασις, is to vindicate some sort of everlasting recurrence. The method, however, is new: Leibniz attempts at applying combinatorics to the question of the eternal return. His basic idea is the following. Every world can be subject to a verbal description. But every verbal description is composed of sentences, which do not exceed a certain length, and these sentences are composed out of words; these words, in their turn, are composed out of the letters of the alphabet. Thus, if we assume that the annals of the world may be adequately captured by our language, whose elements are discrete, we are forced to recognize that the world cannot encompass events which the language would be unable to describe. But since the set of all the combinations with permutations of a finite set of elements is necessarily finite, the annals cannot be indefinitely extended. Consequently, in some infinite period of time, such as the world history, the sequence of letters constituting the annals must repeat itself. At this stage, however, Leibniz introduces an important *caveat* (Leibniz 1991, 72):

aggregativum in quo participant. Et, postquam firmatum est in scientia geometriae quod quantitates quae conveniunt alicui quantitati sunt aequales, et quae sunt diversae et (non) participatae non conveniunt uni quantitati, non ergo invenitur quantitas participata quae contineat omnia. Et, cum non inveniatur, erit impossibile quod revertatur idem situs.”

Interim etsi redeat prius seculum quoad sensibilia seu quae libris describi possunt, non tamen redibit omnino quoad omnia: semper enim forent discrimina etsi imperceptibilia et quae nullis satis libris describi possint. Quia continuum in partes actu infinitas²⁷ divisum est, adeoque in quavis parte materiae mundus est infinitarum creaturarum qui describi nequit libro quantocunque. Sane si corpora constarent ex Atomis, omnia redirent praecise in eadem collectione Atomorum, quandiu novae Atomus aliunde non admiscerentur; veluti si poneretur Mundus Epicuri ab aliis per intermundia separatus. Sed ita talis mundus foret machina quem Creatura finitae perfectionis perfecte cognoscere posset, quod in mundo vero locum non habet.

However, even if some prior century comes back again with respect to the sensible things, i.e. with respect to the things that can be described by books, it is not true that it will come back again with respect to everything: For there will always be some distinctions, even if they are imperceptible and cannot be described by any book. For the continuum is divided in parts which are infinite in number, so that in any part of matter, there is a world of an infinite number of creatures, which cannot be described by any book, whatever be its length. True, if bodies were constituted out of atoms, all things would come back again exactly in the same collection of atoms, provided that new atoms do not aggregate themselves from outside; as if we were to suppose Epicurus' world, separated from others by some interworlds. But in this case, the world would be a machine of which some creature of limited perfection would have a perfect knowledge, which is not the case in the true world.

We understand, on the basis of some other Leibnizian texts, the deep significance of such a distinction between countability and continuity. It is the actual infinity of the divisions of the continuum which allows, if perhaps not a real escape from determinism, at least the possibility of distinguishing between the necessary and the contingent. According to the *General Inquiries about the Analysis of Concepts and Truth* of 1686, the essential propositions are demonstrable by the resolution of their terms, which leads, in a finite number of steps to an identity $A = A$. By opposition, existential, i.e. contingent, propositions, when analyzed, lead to an infinite regress, which can be grasped *a priori* only by the infinite Mind:

Propositio vera contingens non potest reduci ad identicas, probatur tamen, ostendendo continuata magis magisque resolutione, accedi quidem perpetuo ad identicas, nunquam tamen ad eas perveniri. Unde solius Dei est, qui totum infinitum Mente complectitur nosse certitudinem omnium

²⁷ *infinitas* my correction: *infinitarum* Fichant.

contingentium veritatum. Hinc veritatum necessariarum a contingentibus idem discrimen est, quod Linearum occurrentium, et Asymptotarum, vel Numerorum commensurabilium et incommensurabilium. (Cf. Leibniz 1998, 276).

I could stop here. We have seen how some disconnected elements in Alexander's reply to the Stoics were put together and elaborated by Avicenna, and how this new approach of the question of determinism is not unsimilar to Leibniz' treatment of the problem. However, I would like to say a last word on the probability of a historical connexion between Avicenna and Leibniz. Avicenna's doctrine was well-known during the Middle Ages. It was assimilated by Scotus, Nicole Oresme and many others during the Renaissance.²⁸ One of these authors was Christopher Clavius, who writes, in his commentary on the *De sphaera* of John of Sacrobosco, the following words (Clavius 1608, 55–56):

Ex quo efficitur, ut totum cursum per zodiacum absoluat quasi in 49,000 annorum spacio. Nam si praecisè loqui velimus, in tanto annorum spacio Nonus orbis paulò plus conficit, secundum dictas tabulas, quam integrum circulum: conficit enim grad. 360 tertia 5 et quarta 31. Hoc autem spatium, seu tempus 49,000 annorum, appellari solet à plerisque annus Platonicus. Hoc enim interuallo sidera omnia ad eundem situm reditura autumant; immò quidam volunt, tunc omnia quaecumque in mundo sunt eodem ordine esse reditura quo nunc cernuntur. Sed temere hoc asserere videntur: cum enim secundum plerosque motus caelorum sint inter se incommensurabiles, fieri non potest ut unquam omnia sidera eundem situm et ordinem quem nunc habent aut olim habuerunt obtinere possint.

It follows from these considerations that it completes its whole course through the Zodiac in approximately 49,000 years. For if we want to express ourselves with precision, in such an interval of time, the ninth sphere, according to the above-mentioned tables, accomplishes actually a little more than an entire circle, going through 360 degrees, 5 thirds and 31 fourths. This interval of time, i.e. the 49,000 years, is usually called the "Platonic Year". For it is in this interval that, they say, all stars will come back to the same position again. And according to some people, everything in the world will then have to be at the very place in which it is seen today. But this is a bold affirmation. For since, according to the majority of people, the motions of the heavens are mutually incommensurable, it cannot happen that all the stars may one day reach the very position and place that they have today or had in the past.

Since Leibniz, in his *Dissertatio de arte combinatoria* (1666) quotes this commentary of Clavius, we can be sure that already as a young student, he

²⁸ Many of them have been traced back by (Grant 1971).

was acquainted with Avicenna's reformulation of Alexander's reply to the Stoics. It seems likely that Alexander's ἔνστασις against the Stoics contained the seminal idea out of which a whole subsequent tradition—but, paradoxically enough, not Alexander himself—tried to escape fatalism without renouncing the thesis that everything that happens in the world happens in virtue of a cause.

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